Shared Journey's Compiled with Photos 2001

john van garderen

Table of Contents

Start
Cover
CONTENTS
Introduction
Part One
Sharing
Sue
New Zealand
The Tropics
Emily
Now we are Three
Robert
Robert makes four
Europe
Return to Port Vila
My Dad
Sue's Dad
Solomon Islands
Home to New Zealand
Epilogue Summer 2001
PART TWO --/-- STORIES
The Sparkly Stones
My Trip to Vanuatu
Emily and Sue's Scrapbook Story

SHARED JOURNEY'S

Dedicated to Sue and our children

Madalay Publishing winter 2001 John van Garderen & Family

CONTENTS

Part One--/--**Shared Journey**
Introduction
Sharing
Sue
Honeymoon
New Zealand
The Tropics
Emily
Now we are three
Robert
Robert makes four
Europe
Return to Port Vila
My Dad
Sue's Dad
Solomon Islands
Home to New Zealand
Epilogue-winter 2001
Part Two--/--**Stories**
The Sparkly Stones-Emily's story
My trip to Vanuatu-Robert's story
Scrapbook Story-Emily and Mum's story

Introduction

For twenty years, my life has been intertwined with that of my dearest companion and friend—a journey stitched together by love, faith, and the quiet miracles of everyday existence. Along the way, others have stepped into our story, each adding their own threads to the ever-expanding tapestry of our shared experiences.

The ancient words spoken at our wedding still echo in my memory: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife. And they shall be one flesh."

And then, the solemn vow:

"Do you take Suzanne as your wife in a Christian marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health, and be faithful to her as long as you both live?"

We spoke those words with hearts full of youthful hope, unaware of the trials and joys that lay ahead. Yet, in their timeless simplicity, they captured the essence of what marriage would become—a mosaic of blessings, challenges, and the quiet, steadfast presence of love.

Children brought us laughter and light; family and friends became our anchors. Through it all, we felt the guiding hand of God.

This is the story of Sue and me—a journey down an unmapped path, where every step was both a discovery and a revelation.

Part One

Sharing

They say every journey begins with a single step, but ours did not announce itself with fanfare. There was no grand plan, no foresight—just the quiet unfolding of two lives drawn together by something beyond mere chance.

Our souls, shaped by ancient wanderings and divine intention, found their way into this world through the love of our parents. And then, in the vast mystery of existence, two separate beings—once strangers—became soulmates. How does such a thing happen? It remains a wonder.

Love is a gift—one that arrives unasked for, wrapped in layers of vulnerability. From childhood, we build walls around our hearts, defenses crafted by experience and necessity. We learn to wear masks: the quick wit, the charming smile, the effortless confidence that keeps the world at arm's length.

But then, someone comes along who sees past it all.

With Sue, my carefully constructed layers dissolved. Here was a person who did not need my disguises, who met my guarded heart with an openness. To love her was to be consumed by her presence—to measure time by the moments we were together, carrying her image in my mind.

Even in those early days, our bond was a blend of reality and dream, a shared journey that felt both inevitable and miraculous.

Now, twenty years later, I find myself reflecting on this path—one that mirrors age-old stories yet remains uniquely ours. And perhaps, in the telling, new mysteries will unfold.

Sue

“Hi, come and join us out on the balcony,” and she did!
It was a chance meeting, a quiet, late afternoon, just before everyone turned up at the Telford. We meet. Chat, the three of us. Later, we three go next door to La Casalinga's for a cappuccino and Galliano. I say farewell and go home early. Nice lady!
Alice Springs had been home for me for a little over a year by now I felt like a local and enjoyed being considered a Territorian. I still flatted with Frank the high school teacher from Adelaide, and moved around in a fairly busy social scene.
My work with NCR was starting to develop into a good niche with prospects of reasonable banking systems and business financial computers being installed. I was in for more training sessions to advance my career. Alice seemed as good as it can get! It was May after all.
The next day after meeting Sue, I dropped Terry off at the airport, and rang Sue early that evening to see if she would like to go out.
Sue lived in the Anglican Lodge at the end of town nearest to Goat Hill.

I
didn’t ever find it easy to ring people and when there is a hopeful outcome, it gets even harder. I tried this line. “Hi, I’ve counted my change and I’ve got enough to go to the Folk Club tonight. Would you like to come”?
It was one of those silly ways of asking someone out. Seemingly cool, not too pushy, giving the impression that a “no”, could be an acceptable answer.
Well, that's what I got! Sue was studying that night, but maybe we could meet next week.
And so we did!
Our romance started as a friendship and that was what we were both

searching for, someone to be with when mingling with the crowd.
Sue had been in Australia for a few years by now. She and four other friends had moved across to Brisbane from Christchurch. Gail and Kay returned after a few months, and Sue and Cynthia settled into a flat in Brisbane Sue worked at the main hospital cleaning and drove around in an old Ford Falcon station wagon that she referred to as the banana mobile.
Sue had an old school friend Heather, who was now living with a Truckie on the northern outskirts of Alice in a caravan. So with her old suitcase, red bike and green rucksack, Sue boarded a bus going across Queensland to Alice.
She had only been in Alice a short time before we met. Alice was to be a stepping-stone to somewhere else.
It was just fun being together. Our first outing. We sat on a rock in the dry river bed at Simpsons' Gap, listening to Ted Egan singing, and drinking white wine, falling off the rock from time to time. Turning around occasionally to smile at the not amused people behind us telling us to shut up!
I got to know several people at Sue's lodge, also a bunch of meat inspectors from Adelaide, who seemed to live there on short visits.
Sue and I were 55 Chicko Rolls. She has her birthday in June. We had drinks with the Lodge gang and then out to dinner with Heather and Graeme the Truckie. It didn't take long for Sue to settle in Alice. Sue also attended a bible study group, with another lady she had met.
Sue started training sessions in the upper rooms of the Riverside Hotel, to become a cashier at the new casino that was being built next to the Todd River.
We had only been going out a few weeks when I heard that Dad had a stroke. He was reasonably well but had lost motor control in parts of one side of his body. Janet and Gerard were to arrive at my place in the next few days. They were travelling through Australia in their camper van with a motorbike strapped to the back and a fluffy Lillie dog guarding all their possessions.
Sue was the first girlfriend I had ever introduced to any of my family members. I think Janet was a bit surprised and wanted to do her bit to help us along.
It was mid-June, and we took the camper van part off Gerard's Holden one-ton truck and settled it in front of our flats. Packed our sleeping bags and headed off the Ayers Rock. At that time you could camp next to the Rock near some small pubs. The camping ground had a shop of sorts that catered more for the Aborigines who lived in the clearing next to the camping ground. We climbed the Rock, took photos of Sue and me on top of it, and slept in the cold, ice formed inside and outside of the panel van. Janet and Gerard slept with blankets stiffly

frozen as they lay on the back of the Holden deck. We said we were happy!

The next weeks were very pleasant; we had people around for an improvised fondue evening. Also bush trips with Volker and Heather, Janet and Gerard, where we slept out under the stars on sandy river beds, hoping cattle wouldn't trample all over us in the dark of the night.

I wanted to show Sue all the spots I had found walking about in the ranges and hills nearby. We swam in boggy water holes that could be found in the Gap's and further on along the ranges to the Gorges. Climbed through the hole in Corroboree Rock, and braved the bullrush swamp to cross the Todd to climb Mount John.

Sue was great; she followed me along narrow tracks, sometimes no tracks at all. Up dusty mountain tracks to soak in a view, I wanted to share these places, my new home.

In the Alice, on Saturday morning people had lawn sales. This was an event where you put out on the front lawn all sorts of stuff you wanted to sell and placed a sign up, "lawn sale." I bought a sewing machine for $5.00 at one of these lawn sales. It needed a little fixing and then went well. Lots of people came over to use it. I made a wrap-around skirt for Sue from a pattern. I was surprised at how much effort goes into making a skirt. It's rather a sexy thing to do for your girlfriend, to become intimately involved with a piece of her clothing.

The big night of the Casino opening was on my birthday, however, there was a practice night the evening before. It cost $5.00 and you were given $500.00 dollars worth of chips to try your luck. Well, Janet and I took to it like ducks to water. We soon found out the drinks were free, plus heaps of nibbles. The best thing of all was that if you lost all you had, they just gave you another $500.00!

Sue had a special task that night. She was dressed in a lollie counter-type uniform and carried a tray of twenty-cent coins around to give change for the slot machines. It was the only night that we saw the casino full of smiles and laughter. We played two-up and roulette with gay abandon. Janet and I found it hard to stay balanced on the bar stools and devised a cunning plan to keep a few chips for our next visit to the casino. (We weren't alone in that idea as the next few days many people pulled chips out of their pockets to show how clever they were. The casino was one-up. Different chips were in use from day one, onwards.)

That morning Sue had organised a chicken and champagne breakfast for my birthday. For some reason, my enthusiasm wasn't too great at the start of the day.

Casino culture had a world of its own if you were an employee. You would be barred from other casinos and live a nocturnal life.

Sue's cashier's counter was at the back of the main gaming room. It was heavily barred, with only a small gap beneath the bars to exchange chips for cash. Work would start at about 6:00 pm and after balancing, on a good night, you could leave by 2:30 am.
The team that worked with Sue, behind bars of Steel, was made up of mostly experienced casino cashiers. (At this time there were 4 legal casinos in Australia. Two in the Territory and two in Tasmania. Hobart, being the oldest). They were Paul, a large man who seemed to have a sense of humour and had travelled a lot. Simon, who was from Tassie needed a nose job. Sue a pleasant Lady from Alice. (She worked in a restaurant before, and was married to Ross, one of the local air traffic controllers) BT was a tall bubbly blonde. Paul said she was called BT, probably due to her Big Teeth, but she was big
elsewhere too! Gary supervised and trained the cashiers. There was a roster system of sorts, so Sue did get the odd nights off, to completely throw her metabolism out.
The count was always a stressful time. This meant that two cashiers, a government inspector and a Pit Boss would sit around a table and manually count the last night's table's takings. After 2:00 am the cash desk countings were counted. An error would mean the whole lot had to be counted again.
Some restaurants in Alice stayed open til the small hours of the night, to cater for the casino crowd of croupiers, cashiers and security people. Bo-jangles was a favourite. If you could stay up till 3 am or later, you would then see the cafe in full swing with meals on the tables and fresh people dining after a day's work!
The casino crowd had their social scene and slept in the heat of the day.
Sue and I went to a few of the casino parties and had Paul and Simon over to play 21's card game with 20-cent pieces. We also became friendly with the other cashier Sue and her husband.
Sue and I had been going out for some weeks at the time of my birthday; we were close companions, enjoyed each other's company and could talk together with ease. We both knew from early on that there was something to our relationship. The pretence and bantering that held other relationships in my life didn't cloud the companionship Sue and I developed.
I returned to Tassie to see Mum and Dad. My brother Dirk was visiting there too. (He and his family were living in Christchurch, Pastor in a church.) Janet and Gerard still lived in the camper, parked in front of the flat, and Sue shifted in while I was away. (Janet's' idea!).

Sue and I on top of Ayres Rock used to show Sue to Mum

Dad's health seemed OK; however, his mental capacity had suffered quite a bit. He was cheerful enough and seemed to take on his quest to re-learn motor skills to drive his withered side again.

Mum was very pleased to have her two sons home again, yet was fretful for the future. I caught up with some of the family as they came over to visit on Mum and Dad's anniversary.

I had a photo of Sue and I on the summit of Ayers Rock. It was one of those scenic shots taken from a distance, so Sue and I were two small figures sitting on a rocky ridge with the desert flat and endless behind us.

Poor Mum, strained her eyes the best she could to make out Sue's features. Janet had told her that Sue was a New Zealand Maori. Her tan and dark features could lead Mum to believe that. She was pleased her son had an inkling for the opposite sex. One time Mum asked Janet if she thought I was gay, as I didn't ever take a girlfriend home! Of course, Janet didn't give Mum peace of mind on that issue.

Dirk was more quizzical and wanted to know how serious we were, about Sue's background and what we had in mind. I called in on my friends down southern Tassie and caught up with the old group and Dirk Weiringa. I think he and his wife Elsa were relieved that I was in a relationship and now would come back to settle in Tassie and return to sanity.

It was winter and the Red Centre beckoned, more so, with the distance and time away, being asked about Sue, set a longing in my mind.

It was soon after my return that Sue and I made a commitment that if

we were to live together; we were in for a long term.
We bought a Toyota four wheel drive Ute with a cage on the back and large wooden tray for a roof, this extended from the cab over the Ute to the tailgate. It was a great bush machine and the tray could take our swags. We could sleep out in the bush, above the ground in safety. I made an attaching bench with a small sink in it, which would clamp onto the side of the Ute. Luxury, we could wash up and keep the ants away.

Our Toyota ute setup with sink and sleeping platform

We set off to distant water holes, followed dry riverbeds and enjoyed a shared solitude in the outback. One weekend we drove to Palm Valley. The last 30 miles was a tricky track. Sue noticed a young lady pass us in a flash Toyota. She was not to be outdone and drove the Ute right into the valley. Palm Valley is hidden. You drop down from a desert to a wide ravine. The river Finke runs through it with each side of the river green with ancient Palms. A timeless forgotten place. We bathed in the river and stared above the palms at the crumbly, red clay cliffs on each side of the ravine.
Janet and Gerard had continued on their travels, Frank had moved out of the flat and Sue's old Kiwi friend Heather (who she came to Alice to visit) shifted into the flat next door with another lady. She
had broken up with her Truckie and was not a happy chappie. (We found out it was his Toyota that we bought; he had done most of the cage work to it and then sold it on to the person we bought it from. Small town, Alice)
Our time nearly came to an end. We decided to go on pushbikes through the Gap south on the highway to a winery. It was great fun. I

was tanked up on wine and wobbling along the side of the road when a loud blast from an air horn sounded behind us. I swerved out into the road and nearly met a steel roo-bar of a huge cattle train. A two-trailer one, it swerved around me and carried on. Even on pushbikes, we were fearless!

Sue braved a trip on the back of my trail bike. A 400 cc Yamaha.

We only went for a bush bash together once. I think Sue felt a bit large on the seat behind me. However, I did blow-up the motor soon after that.

Looking for an engagement ring is one of the most satisfying things a young man can do! In Alice, it's even more exciting, as the shops are few and those serving you know what's up and who you are.

My proposal to Sue was more by a mutual understanding. We had agreed to live together under a commitment and now wanted to be engaged. To celebrate the moment, we walked from the flat across the Todd and climbed Mount John. It was one of my favourite places, from the top you could see Alice spread out below; mountain ranges to the east, west and north, and the south the flatness disappeared into the horizon.

With a ring and a small bottle of champagne in hand, I again asked Sue to be my wife.

It was some time later that we held an engagement party. A show at the flat, BBQ kebabs and extras. John and Sue were a unit.

The nearest other town is Tenant Creek, about 6 hours north. I had some work to do at Tenant Creek and we spent a few days there, even danced to Kiwi performer, Tina Cross. I enjoyed work trips with my fiancee by my side.

Sue could run, and had run a few distance runs in Brisbane. Alice had a top of the hill run, about 10 klms during midday. I encouraged Sue to enter as I thought hundreds would run it. Sue and about 50 others set up on this grueling run, no water stops and stinking hot. Poor thing, she had lots of stamina! In our circles she was a hero to have participated.

Volker and Heather lived in a caravan. It seemed a good idea that Sue and I should get a caravan tow it behind the Toyota and head off to the beaches of far north Queensland. So we bought a sturdy l5-foot caravan and parked it in front of the flat. It had a small air conditioner to fit the side window and spare axles. A fitting, first home! Maybe we could work our way down to Tassie and get married there.

Alice was getting hot, Christmas not too far away. The only place with green grass was the town swimming pool. We would go there to lie on the grass, picnic and read. Standing in the shallow end of the pool you could look over the grass, south to the Gap, and each side of the gap the red mountain range stretched across the view. These were

worn down ancient mountains, now just hills. The Center draws you in!
The Todd was in flood, foamy water from bank to bank. Riverbed resident aborigines had to find higher ground. The townsfolk went silly, walking up and down the riverbanks watching the river flow. River gums, usually surrounded by golden sand, now stood firm in the rush of water. “See the Todd flow three times and you’ll never leave”, was the local legend. This was my third flood.
Scrappy the dog had puppies under the old couch at the front of the flat. After 6 weeks of puppies in and out of the flat it was good to find owners for them. Sue wasn't a dog person, puppies for a while was OK. Scrappy moved on soon after to live with the Aborigines who lived on a vacant block nearby. We saw her a few times; I think she wanted to keep her puppies next time.
It was nearly Christmas and we needed a Christmas tree. I found one in the bush through the Gap and put it in the living room. The tree was a bit dry and sparse, so I put candles in it. In the evening I would light the candles, and we would sit in the ambience of candlelight.
We had friends over one night, and with enthusiastic wave of my arms I said,”whoosh” during a story about wind. Well, I caused wind and the Christmas tree flared up in flames! Nice way to put impact on a story.
Between Christmas and New Years, Sue and I traveled west past Glen Helen to the Mt Sonder district across the Finke. We stayed at Redbank Gorge and swam in the water holes in the narrow ravines and slept the warm nights under the stars. We were planning our exit out of Alice. To Queensland.
A wedding date is something that is usually well researched and a solid date to work too. In our case, it just happened. My Mum and Dad had gone over to Christchurch to see my brother Dirk and Gonny and also visited Sue's Dad.
Between them, they understood that we were to be married at the end of February. When we heard this, we thought it was a good idea and picked the last weekend in February. We asked Rev Lamont at the Flynn Memorial Church if the date was OK and if we could be married there. It was quite simple. Dirk Weirenga agreed to come up to be best man and Sue's friend Cynthia front Brisbane was to be the bridesmaid. Janet and Gerard the family and whoever we knew in Alice, invited.
Sue had left the casino and was given a croupier's certificate by mistake. She put on a blue uniform and worked at Cole's supermarket filling up boxes with “bush orders”. I had an evening job stacking shelves. We wanted to save up for the trip.
It was during January that we started to re think our plans. I was not too happy about leaving NCR and odd jobbing and the north of

Queensland didn't appeal as much anymore. I sent a letter to John Nixon in Noumea to see if there were any Job opportunities with NCR back in the Solomon's or Vanuatu..A reply came early February saying a job was there but l needed to be in Noumea early March.
We sold the Caravan and the Toyota just before our wedding day, and booked tickets to Noumea, via Melbourne, Tassie and New Zealand.
Sue met Paul in town and said." I'm off to buy the wedding rings and John's off to buy the tickets"; he said she had the cheapest option.
I was pleased to have the future mapped out. I knew where we were going to live and the lifestyle we were to live in. Sue met the challenges of the change of plans, and the rush to a wedding. Later, a whirlwind trip meeting the family and finally live somewhere in the Pacific. It was a lot of trust on her part, in her abilities to live with change and to go to the unknown with her man.
We had started to go to church after asking Rev. Lamont to marry us, The Flynn church was in the middle of the town and had a number of aborigines drop in to the service front time to time.

Our Wedding at Bo-Jangles Restaurant Alice Springs /p>

During our wedding rehearsal, a distraught young aboriginal woman came into the church. Rev Lamont stopped what he was doing with us and with compassion, consoled this woman. He had a heart for these people.

Feb 27"' arrived quickly, Sue and the ladies were driven to church in

Volker's shiny Nissan, and Dirk and I walked to church across the road from the Memorial Club. I met Sue at the door and we walked into the church together to be wed. We exchanged our holy vows and placed rings on each other's ring finger.
Photo's taken at the Telegraph Station and off to a reception dinner at Bo jangles. We booked the place, and with forty guests celebrated our wedding. We said farewell to all, and walked through an archway of friendly arms to the outside world, to start our married life together.

Honeymoon

A Marriage is not the joining of two worlds, but an abandoning of two worlds so that a new one might be formed.

Glen Helen Resort, west of Alice, last days.

Friends farewells at Alice airport had been a regular event for us, but now being our turn, it struck us that it might be a long time till we see the Alice again. Janet and Gerard and others saw us off. It was the Monday alter our wedding. The previous day we had packed up our things into cardboard boxes, addressed
these to Vanuatu and delivered them earlier today to airfreight. The biggest luggage item we now owned was the ironing table!

At Melbourne airport Cory and Helen met us. This was the first time they had met Sue. We stayed at their place and did some sightseeing around the city of Melbourne. Sue also got her passport in order, and was given a temporary passport until she could change to her married name. Cory and Helen and the small kids showed us around Dandenong and so, Sue met more of my family.

To meet up with Mum and Dad in Tassie means a flight across the Bass Strait to Devonport in a noisy, propeller Fokker Friendship. Flying over to the rolling green hills of the North West Coat of Tassie, my home turf is always an emotional time. It is possible to see most of the coastline and the towns dotted along the long ribbon of sandy coast, and into the interior low mountain ranges, with rivers flowing through the paddocks, and out to sea.

Mum and Dad met us at the airport. Finally they met their daughter in

law. I didn't realise at the time how much they missed not being at the wedding. Although it was not possible for Dad to travel to Alice. Coming home as a married man with my wife, only a few days married and staying at Mum and Dad's was a whole new experience. Sue and Mum chatted away and Dad seemed chuffed!

The next few days, I wanted to show Sue everything. We climbed Mt Montgomery in the Dial Range, just behind Ulverstone to look over the Leven District. Walked the West Ulverstone Beaches and climbed through the cave on Goat Island. We even swam in the big pool near our old favourite fishing spot on the Island. We caught up with some people I had grown up with and drove into the countryside to visit the Leven Canyon. This seemed to be the place to visit at a family gathering.

Saying farewell to Mum and Dad was emotional, as I did not know if I would see Dad again. It was special to come home as man and wife. For me to able to show how proud I felt about Sue.

In Kingston, Dirk and Else put us up in their sleepout and that evening most of the people I knew in Kingston came over to greet us and put on another wedding party for us.

Hobart is a pretty city, with its old historic sandstone buildings, Mt Wellington towering just behind the city, and the huge harbour of the Derwent River. I took Sue on a tour of the flats I had lived in, and drove along favourite roads.

We were given the Hoogenhout's shack at Stewarts Bay to stay a couple of nights. This is close to Port Arthur on the Tasman Peninsular. A pretty place, with a half-moon bay beach and lots of native bush. Port Arthur, with it ruins of convict days, made a nice day out, we rolled down the grassy slopes, walked from ruin to ruin and enjoyed wine out on the veranda of the shack. It was a pleasant honeymoon break on our own.

Flying to Christchurch from Hobart was a mixture of me pointing out places as flew away from Tasmania and Sue pointing out places as we neared the coast of New Zealand. over the Alps, down into the flat of Christchurch. Sue was home! This was her territory. Her chance now to show me off, and show off NZ to me! It was 13 March 82, Sue was home!

New Zealand

We met at Sue's Dad's place. It was now my turn to be checked out by the family. I met this with a nervous curiosity. Sue had given me all the family details, but now these people became real and it dawned on me that I was now part of another family too. Things had moved fast and were moving faster. Less than 9 months ago, New Zealand was that travel brochure place with geysers and Maori's.

Now I was part of a New Zealand family.

Sue's sister Kay had set up the bedroom for us, even pots and pans hanging under the bed. She had come down from Wellington to see us. Sue's younger brother Ian lived at home with his Dad in a sleepout behind the garage. (He called this the only bastion of sanity in the yard) He was still at University. Sue's younger sister, Julie also turned up. I think Sue's Dad was quite chuffed to have the whole brood at home. (Sue's Mum had passed away some time ago when Sue was a teenager).

That evening, my brother Dirk and Gonny came around. They had just been to a wedding and were well-dressed for the visit.

It was Sue's turn to show off Christchurch. It was like being back in the University cities of Britain. Complete with parks and rivers.

We travelled south to Waimate to visit Sue's cousins June and Steve. Also met Mack Agnew, Sue's Dad's stepbrother. On the way back stayed with Anne in Timaru. We drove up to Nelson through the mountain ranges and alongside wild rivers, and back along the east coastline via Kaikoura. This was certainly a spectacular and varied country.

Sue's Dad organised a family photo session and met Sue's Auntie Gwen and her husband Uncle Ray. I felt welcomed by my new family.

Dirk came around very early one morning and Ian and I went salmon fishing with him at the mouth of the Waimakariri River. There were about sixty other anglers there, all spaced about 2 meters apart and cast into the river. It was still dark when we arrived. We fished with the darkness changing to the colour of dawn, the river mist rising. No fish caught yet is a truly unique New Zealand experience.

We flew up to Auckland, Stayed the night and left the next day for Noumea. At the UTA airport counter problems started with Sue's passport, the name changes had been put in, but it was hard to follow. The departure of the plane came nearer and the UTA assistant became more adamant that Sue could not board. (Even though we had residency permits for Vanuatu). Finally, a senior person sorted it out and we got onto the plane. Holidaymakers staring at us, who had delayed the flight and deprived them of minutes of their holiday!

It was a whirlwind visit to meet the families and for Sue to get a chance to be home. We left New Zealand with the intention of staying

in the Islands for 18 months to 2 years and then settling back in Australia or New Zealand. I knew where we were going and I was very keen to spend some time with my new wife, romancing in the tropics. Sue, on the other hand, had a glimpse of home and then was flown away for another term away from home.

The Tropics

The familiar Island of New Caledonia took shape in front of us as we neared Tontouta Airport. The steep ridge of nickel-rich mountains towered to the left of us as we landed. French flags, brown uniformed Gendarmes with peak caps and the tropical warmth greeted us as we walked over the tarmac to the arrival lounge. We took the tourist coach to Noumea. Chusuka, the Japanese girl I knew from before, was the tour guide on the bus. The past was not too far behind. I said hello and introduced my wife Sue.

We stayed in Noumea for a few days. I caught up with work and what to expect in Pt Vila. John Nixon the owner of the company was in and we discussed salaries. I was to get 6 weeks holidays per year and a full return airfare, Pt. Vila to Hobart for both of us each year. Sue and I had a brief look around Noumea and enjoyed the French atmosphere. We met some of the expat staff at work, Bill Saville and Gavin Black, and their wives.

The flight from Noumea to Vanuatu is a little over an hour. On a clear day, the Loyalty Islands are in view, then the islands of southern Vanuatu, and finally the island of Efate with the capital, Pt. Vila on the southern side. Landing at Pt Vila is truly dropping into a tropical Island. Passing over coastal islands and bays to land on a palm tree lined airstrip. This was now the Republic of Vanuatu. An independent pacific nation, our home.

Customs and immigration now were not divided into French and British sections like in the old condominium days. The Vanuatu flag was flying and everyone official wore the same uniforms.

Gary Nettleton met us as we came into the arrival hall. Gary was now the manager of NCR He was about our age and had taken over from me after I had left working with Neil Begley. Neil had married his solicitor friend and moved to Australia. So Gary was on his own, so that's why we had to get to Pt Vila as soon as we could to assist Gary. The manager at the air bar, an American, Paul shook hands with me and said," How long have you been away 6 or 8 weeks?"

Gary took us to our flat at Tassariki Park. These were two-storey flats in rows of three. These were popular flats with the expat British public servants in the condominium days.

On our travels through Tasmania and New Zealand, we bought various things and were also given several wedding presents. John Hoogenhout gave us sheets and pillowcases. The flat was furnished we had enough to set-up, so we shifted in straight away. This was Thursday 25" March.

It was Sue's turn to make this our first married house into a home. Our stuff had arrived from Alice a few weeks earlier; the boys from work dropped the boxes off. It didn"t take long to unpack the few things we

had. Sue did well, soon we had a home.
Reality had dawned on us. We had left the comfort zone of Alice and friendships, briefly became acquainted again with family, now miles away from all of this, we are to start our married life completely dependant on each other. We have a home, I had a job, and we both have a whole new world to step into.
During the next weeks, we discovered the choice we have made to be married, to be husband and wife. Was a choice done, blindfolded, in a way it is a process of decisions, it felt that we didn't make them, we grew into them. We were learning that married life is certainly much more than what we bargained for. Being together gets us beyond our depths, out of the shallows of our ego into real interpersonal encounters.
The beauty of new married journey is to be confronted intimately, day after day, coming to grips with the mystery of life, of that other life next to me, the life outside of myself.
Two years since I lived here seemed to be a long space of time in Pt. Vila. New Hebrides became Vanuatu. The people now called themselves Ni Vanuatu. The names of the parks, streets and government buildings were changed and now a president, George Sokomanu lived in the old French High Commissioner's residence Father Walta Lini was the prime minister and leader of the Vanuaaku Parti. This was the Anglophone party, the francophone were in opposition. Bishlama (the local Pidgin English) was the language of parliament. Parliament sessions were broadcast in full on the local radio. The speaker was a Ni Vanuatu, however, the Clerk of Parliament was an Oxford scholar who was doing a thesis on pacific politics. Joe's voice would pop up on the radio in clear Oxford English, usually giving some advice to both the speaker and politicians on parliamentary procedures. With the centralisation of government, some of the old British or French government buildings were used as storehouses. The new French Hospital was rotting away in the tropical weather through disuse and neglect. The French prison became the main calaboose. All school facilities were still in use, however, most of the older colonial, wooden British government buildings were left to rot away. The fine old British High Commissioner's residency on the Island of Irrikiki was also rented out to a local businessman. No more Prince Charles birthday celebrations to enjoy on Irrikiki.
There were a few new buildings on the main street, the financial sector had enjoyed prosperity with the elevation of the tax-free status of Vanuatu.
There was still a strong underlying presence of the Anglophone francophone division among the Ni Vanuatu, with many adamantly French in behaviour. The French supermarket, Ballande still had the

French Butcher and a variety of products direct from France. Burns Philp still traded copra with small inter island freighters loading and unloading at the wharves in front of the store. Commerce didn't seem to be effected by independence.
Barclays Bank now had the largest congregation of British expatriates. Most of the expats living in Pt. Vila were either businessmen who had been living there for years or people on aid contracts. Instead of cash grants to this new republic, aid was given in skilled people to train up the local Ni Vanuatu. The old black Citroens and Jag's that had chauffeured French and British high ranking public servants now still had Ni Vanuatu drivers, but uncomfortable prominent Ni Vanuatu in suits now occupied the back seats.
NCR had also changed somewhat. Neil Begley and his new wife had moved up to the Solomon's to manage NCR in Honiara. Gary was now the manager in Pt Vila, Madeleine a Ni Vanuatu Franco Phone, and fluent Anglophone ran the office, with an English young lady, Debbie Trebelico coming in for 3 days a week. Debbie's husband Geoff worked at Barclays Bank. Willie Lop from Tanna still worked there but was going to leave soon. He found it hard to work for a new Masta after Neil Begely left. Stephen who started when I first arrived in Pt. Vila was still there and now Isaac a francophone man from Pentecost Island, was our typewriter tech.
There had been a number of new computers installed in government offices and banks since I had left. I soon saw why Gary was keen to get me over, the workload had certainly increased in the last 2 years, and so had the annual turnover.
My car was the van, a tiny Daihatsu 900-cc thing that bounced along, but got us everywhere. From the first Friday, I was busy at work.
Sue's residency permit had “work prohibited” stamped in it, it meant exactly that. So Sue had to find things to do during the day. I started work at 7:30 and stopped for lunch 12 to 2 then back to work till 5:00 pm.
The first day on her own at the flat was a bit confusing, she noticed lots of Ni Vanuatu ladies going in and out of the houses and wondered if we were living in a group of flats mainly occupied by Ni Vans. They were the house girls and garden boys. Next door to us lived Henry and Chris Gibson with their 2-year-old son Isaac. Henry was with the Australian Army over for 18 months to train the Vanuatu Mobile Force (part of the police) on small arms. In the flats in front of us, another Australian Army officer and his family lived. This guy had to train a bunch of Ni Vanuatu soldiers to perform as the official brass band. He did quite well, a very patient man.
There were also some French people living in the flats. Sue didn't want a house girl. We had a small flat, only two of us and she hand-washed.

During the first week we were there, I came home after work, Henry met me in the drive and said Sue was distressed and at their place. Sue used to wear a sarong around the heat of the day while working in the flat. Some Ni Vanuatu guy knocked on the floor, Sue opened it, and there he was, pants on his head and playing with himself frantically. She yelled and slammed the door. The guy ran away. Henry called the police and they came looking up into the trees to see if he was hiding there. They said he was harmless and had a sick head. Poor Sue. When the story got around town, Sue got lots of advice, like, keep a bush knife at the door and whip it off, if he shows it again.
Mah-jong was the ladies' game. We played mah-jong with Henry and Chris some evenings during the week. Sue soon got to know several people and worked in the expat ladies' scene. Many of the expat women were in the same position of not being allowed to work. One thing about moving into a small expat community is that you are soon noticed as the new people in town, and people make a point of making themselves known to you. We started to fit in quickly. The first weekend we traveled to various local spots in the small van. Swam at the beautiful beaches and drank and dinned at the resorts. The adjustment to this lifestyle happened reasonably quickly for both of us. I ran in the Hash House Harriers and Sue with the Ladies Hash. Sue also tried cooking many different styles of meals with what produce was available at the market and supermarkets. She became quite good at getting good bargains at the market.

Our house at Mele Beach

After about 6 weeks at the TassariLi Flats, I found a catamaran out at a Devil's Point Road. This was about 15 minutes out of town, past Mele Village, on a long curved bay with heaving black volcanic sand. To one side of the bay was Mele Island, (with Hideaway Island resort on it). The beach was lined with palm trees and some huge native trees.

The people, who owned the paper tiger catamaran, lived in one of the houses on a compound of about 6 houses. Their house was a simple kit house, the type that the inside walls didn't go right up to the ceiling, so it was open, room to room. These people were to shift out soon. Sue and loved the place and its location. We rushed to rent it and got it. It was cheap to rent, so NCR was pleased as they paid for our accommodation. The compound had it own well and a generator that provided power most of the time, from 6:00 am to 11: pm.

At night we would fall asleep under the fan, with the sound of crashing surf on the beach only 100 meters away. It was idyllic, swimming at sunset after work, sailing 30 minutes across the bay to Hide Away Island for a cocktail drink and then sailing back home to the envy of the tourists. The other people living in the compound were laid-back type of people. The houses were neat but didn't fit in the category to impress.

We had met some English people there who became good friends.

Mary and Graham Teskey who were also newly wed. Sue met Mary at the gym; they moved out to the compound and lived just down the road from us. Soon after we met Marge and Dave Garlick with their two children Rachel and Stuart. Dave was a senior in British customs and now training locals to eventually take over the customs. We invited these people over for dinner and lit candles when the 11:00 lights out occurred. It added to the atmosphere. Marge and Dave are extremely social people. We got on well with them and met many other English people. Also, the Barclays Bank crowd were part of our social scene, especially with Debbie working with me. I also enjoyed being with the English as I had lived in Britain.

Sue set off for a jog for a few miles along the main road. She heard someone behind a bush say, psst, psst! She had to see who it was and found a Ni Van exposing himself to her. Was this a pattern that she had to go through every time we shifted house? She ran back to the house and decided to give up jogging. We also started to lose the odd tee shirt and shorts from the clothesline. It was time to get a house girl. Martha from neighbouring Mele Village got the job. She was in her mid-teens, had both her top front teeth knocked out to enhance her beauty, spoke a little English and seemed to do a good job.

In July Sue and I flew up to Santo. I had some work to do in

Luganville. We stayed at Hotel Santo and spent a day at Champagne Beach. This is one of the most beautiful beaches in Vanuatu. It's about 40 minutes drive up the East Coast of Santo. The beach gets its name from a spring that bubbles up through the clear sea about 5 metres offshore at one end of the bay. We had the beach to ourselves and swam in clear water looking out to sea at the steep small islands floating on the distant horizon. The atmosphere oozed romance. Sue and I swam and then lay on the white powder sand, bare bums to the sun!

The sweets that Sue used to call the pill were no match to passion, Sue announced she was pregnant. The baby was due soon after our first wedding anniversary. I thought that was just great, so did our friends. Pt Vila was a fertile place for most of them too!

The impact of having a child, our child took a while to have an effect on me. Sue was way ahead of me, plans were being made and that a change to our lifestyle that everyone said we would face, was there in front of us.

One thing about Pt Vila, that once pregnant, a woman took on a position of great interest amongst the other expatriate ladies, also the family doctor became a more important person. Our doctor was Fred Bott, an Aussie who the English described as a cane cutter. He was a big, gruff man, with bush manners, that put some of the English ladies off.

Sue got support from the group we called the Earth Mothers, Gail (a Canadian) and Kath Bell (a Kiwi) were running a group called Mama Belong Vanuatu. They were promoting Breast is Best and ran a weighing schedule for babies, mainly expats. This was a great help to Sue, as confidence to get through a pregnancy in Pt. Vila needs much, empathy from those that know.

During Sue's pregnancy, we travelled to a few places. We had the feeling that once the baby came we couldn't move as freely as we could now. When Sue was about 4 months and had the round tummy of an expectant mum, 1 had to go down to Noumea for a fortnight. Sue came along, we stayed in a pleasant hotel, and she met up with the Noumea expat ladies from work. Carol Saville was an Australian married to Bill the programmer and Marilyn, Gavin Black's wife.

We drove to various spots along the New Caledonian coastline and just enjoyed being immersed in the French culture and cafes.

Back in Vanuatu we flew down to Tanna and stayed at the Black Sands bungalows. These were very basic bungalows with woven cane walls and thatched palm prong roofs. I have a photo of Sue, looking very hot and bothered sitting in the doorway of our bungalow. Tanna is pretty but the roads are undeveloped and time almost stands still. The main attraction is the Yasur Volcano. We took a small tour bus

along bouncy coral roads and eventually ended up parked almost on the rim of the volcano. (Last time I was here, it was an hour's walk up the mountainside track to get to the rim.) We peered down into its throat. It spewed rocks up over our heads as it coughed smoke and made sounds like giant steel doors slamming shut. Some other tourists with us clambered back into the shelter of the bus from the falling stones. The stones were only about golf ball size. It was a magnificent venture to stare into the bowels of the earth, but not a place to stay too long.

We received news that Sue's brother Ian was getting married to Audrey in October. Sue flew back to Christchurch for 4 weeks, via Fiji. It was also a good chance to get a scan of the baby to see if all was ok. It was, the baby had all the right bits a baby should have. It was good for Sue to be back home, catch up with family and buy things for the baby. A sheepskin rug was the number one thing on the list.

While Sue was in New Zealand, I spent a bit more time with Gary socially. Gary had arrived in Pt Vila, a non-smoker and non-drinker. Over a short period, he found his niche with yachties and some small businessmen. Don Marmo was a wood craftsman with some fingers missing. He owned a cruising Cat, Ned Kelly, that he built on the West Coast of the USA. There was Paul who had a small
air-conditioning business and Joe the English Parliamentary Clerk who was friendly with Linda, who owned Linda Upholstery. Gary would meet up with this gang at Linda's shop at the edge of the main business area, have a few beers and then usually move off to a Nakamal to drink kava. It was a quiet way to wind up the day. Garry was also friendly with a Ni Vanuatu girl and moved into the singles scene of "alternative expats", who somehow made a living in Vanuatu, to keep residency.

Kava drinking at the local Pt Vila Nakamal's was a basic affair. Kava is made from the root of a kava plant and is ground up into mulch, placed into some thin calico and left to soak in water. It is drunk out of half coconut shells, numbs the lips and mouth and causes a pleasant sensation. The Nakamal is usually a low-roofed basic shed, with a dirt floor and low benches along the wall. The kava is made in an old tin in one of the corners, under a kerosene lamp. (Bright lights are uncomfortable for kava drinkers.) A half coconut shell (a bowl) is bought for about 50 cents. You drink this outside the Nakamal, straining the kava through your teeth, then spit out the roughage. Then sit down on one of the benches and quietly talk to each other in the semi-darkness. Kava is always drunk at sunset. After a few bowls, you feel very relaxed and find your legs aren't too cooperative, so you stay seated until you can walk again. Then off for a hamburger or pizza in town. Nakamal's were usually near to squatter settlements on

the edge of town. Each island had its area where Wantoks (people of the same island) would settle until they found work and a more permanent place to live. For many, this was as far as they got. Early on Gary told me that if I wanted to get to know the Ni Vanuatu, I would have to learn Bishlama. To sit with the men at a Nakamal and story on, listening to everyday life as the Ni Vanuatu lived it, laughing at the most basic things that would humour them, certainly did open up another world. I had thought I understood the locals, but this was a nice way to talk to the working man on his patch. Pt Vila was a stopping place for cruising yachties. They could easily get a permit to stay for 3 months, which was welcome at the start of the cyclone season. The big event for the cruising yachties was the annual yacht race from Musket Cove in Fiji to Pt Vila. Don and Gary and some friends sailed over to Musket Cove on Ned Kelly to race back Gary found a 34-ft Trimaran for sale and sailed it back to Pt. Vila. He had a new interest in life and sailed it well.

Gary and I got on well at work, but we left each other to our own social lives. One thing I did do was introduce to Gary to 10 o'clock coffee at a local café. This became a regular part of each working day.

Sue came home and now looked very pregnant. The humid, summer had begun. Sue slowed down to a pace of life in which she tried to be most comfortable. A Tummy full of moving arms and legs acting as an in-built heater is not the best way to see your first wet season through. Sue had bags of different coloured wool bundles. She crocheted a multi-coloured double bedspread and gave it to Cynthia in Brisbane. It was something she had started to make for her years ago, and now in her pregnant state was adamant about getting it finished and sent off!

I got into furniture making out on the covered patio in front of our house; I made a changing table, a swinging cradle, and some furniture for our bedroom. I enjoyed this woodwork, especially as it was in preparation for our new child. Also in sympathy with Sue, I developed a good round tummy. We have a photo where we are on both side on and about the same size!

I wanted to celebrate St Nicholas Day, out on Mele Beach in front of our house with as many small kids as we could have around. We invited mostly English friends. Sue and I made beef croquet, apple flapper, ole bolen, peper noten, and as much Dutch stuff as I could remember. On December 6'", we held a barbeque on the front lawn and headed over to the beach for a treasure hunt. I had made up a treasure trail with clues, which told the story of St Nicholas. It was after 5 and most of the dads arrived from work as we were going through the treasure trail. I had made a small treasure chest full of lollies and buried it about a foot under the beach, 6 giant steps from a big tree towards the sea. Simple enough, but do you think we could

find that treasure box? All the dads were digging into the sand, trying to find it. We shifted our party over to the beach, kids and all. We brought the Dutch food treats over on plates. I dropped a plate of apples flappen into the sand, brushed the sand off and put them back on the plate, hoping no one would notice. They were a bit crunchy. Vera our only Dutch guest arrived and said it was nice that we celebrated St Nicholas Day, but why today as it was December 5" in Holland? I would like to think that the buried treasure, which we didn't find, still lies there waiting for the treasure hunter. John and his buried treasure was a story for some time.

Sailing the Paper Tiger Cat on Mele Bay. Hideaway Island Resort on the left

Our first Christmas and New Year was celebrated with our English friends. Beach picnic and an evening dinner at a restaurant. The English may have been homesick for a white Christmas, but certainly did not lack in appetite for Christmas dinners.

Our first Boxing Day was full of drama. I had pulled the catamaran high onto the beach and tied it to a tree about half a mile down the beach from our place. The catamaran's hulls were about 6 feet apart and held together by two square sectioned aluminium bars. Usually, a catamaran would have a tarpaulin tightly
stretched across this in-between the two hulls to give an area to sit on and sail the boat. Ours had a large piece of thick plywood instead.

This was starting to rot, and on my last sail, fell off into the sea. So there was nothing between the two hulls now. About mid-morning the weather changed to squalls and I thought I would tie the boat up onto the tree closer in front of our place. The waves crashing onto the beach were about a meter, but further out in the bay, it looked calmer. I pushed the boat through the surf and took off into the bay, to tack into the wind, to get up the bay to our place. The cat would not sail well into the wind. After a bit of zigzag tacking, a squall came across the bay and pushed me about 400 meters offshore where I flipped the cat over and the thing turned completely upside down. I tried all I could to upright it but no luck.

The tide was on the way out, I hadn't moved far, sea squalls came and went. Here was I stuck out in the bay. The top of the mast (about 20 ft long) dug into the sandy seabed as the tide dropped. I dismantled the mast by diving under water and lashed it and the rolled up sail on its boom, between the hulls.

Meanwhile, Sue, very pregnant saw me flapping about on an upturned boat. She was on the shore, looking over the crashing waves at me about 400 meters offshore, and thought I was a goner! I tried to paddle the cat back to shore, but an upside down, slowly filling with water cat did not move through the water well. I saw John Turner a neighbour from up the road launch his tin boat off the beach and he came out to me smiling. Threw over a rope and dragged me back to shore. The boat was pretty full of water, and I think it would have sunk out there, leaving me, almost stuffed to swim the 400 meters back to shore. So, Sue saved the day, and Boxing Day was to become a no-boating day!

I had a nice tarpaulin made at Linda's upholstery. Sue and I had had many comfortable sails in her on calmer days. Sue with her huge tummy, would flop into the centre of the tarpaulin and hold the boat steady.

Mary and Graham Teskey moved into a house on our compound.

This was great, as we would visit each other in the evenings. Just short walks down a moonlit coral road back home after a pleasant night out. Graham was also an excellent curry cook. He had lived in Fiji and learned some great culinary skills.

Front Yard Mele Beach house

The compound was large and had an assortment of houses on it with heaps of trees and bushes separating them. Tom Young lived in a small 2-roomed smack. He was a single Queenslander and did welding and plumbing jobs around town. Tom had build at speedboat out of XXXX yellow beer cans laid in rows and fiberglassed together. He used to ask Sue.

“ When was the little sproggie due?”

There was a native-style bungalow where the Calvert's lived. Ken Calvert was an agricultural scientist and missionary. They had come out to live in Tanna some years ago with young adopted triplet boys from New Zealand. Ken started a training school to teach agricultural skills to the Tannese. He had a simple school in the centre of Tanna Island, near a village called Middlebush. It was called K.I.T.O.W. (Kistian Institute of Technology of Whitesands.). They were having their furlough in Pt Vila after which, Ken and his wife were returning to be a pastor in Middlebush, Southland New Zealand. The triplets had grown up and left Tanna some years before.

Tsali and his wife and young family lived in the flats behind us.

He was a Ni Van bank clerk. A calm, pleasant man.

Emily

Sue and I had a quiet wedding anniversary; the baby was due any day now. It was Graham's birthday on 9" March, Graham was sure the baby would be born that day. On Graham's birthday Sue started to get more regular contractions in the morning and through the day. That morning her waters broke, but we decided to stay home until the contractions were closer together as we were told. At about 7 that evening we drove to the hospital. Dr Bott could not be found.

The French-speaking Ni Vanuatu nurse checked Sue and said she was too early and sent us home. Poor Sue went to bed. I was unsure and walked over to Graham's place, had a beer at his party and then told Dave and Marge what had happened. Marge went straight over to Sue. Sue was not at all comfortable. It was just after eleven and the generator had stopped. Marge hated the dark; she had a lot of difficulty with the dark, especially if there was no power to switch on a light. We had a torch above the bed. I drove into town to find Dr Bott, Marge braved the semi-darkness of our bedroom with Sue. I found Bott and he told me to bring Sue in straight away and I should have done that as soon as her waters broke. Good info for next time? I sped back home and Sue and Marge were ready to go, whether I came home or not. Off to Vila Base Hospital again. Dr. Bott came in and checked Sue and said he would be back in a few hours. Sue was still wearing her red maternity dress. She was placed on the delivery table and started. Dr. Bott came back, tried to fit into a miniature hospital gown, threw it on the floor in disgust and in his shirt and shorts, wearing jandles, assisted in Sue's birthing. I sat on a chair next to Sue. She pushed and Dr Bott asked me to come around and look at the baby's head. At about 5:42 after much pushing, out popped a little girl. A beautiful small girl, our child. Bott was pleased, Sue was great, and I was overwhelmed. The joy of seeing my own child, the strength of my wife in her delivery, and the start of a new life, is a great moment in my life. Sue and baby girl went to sleep; I went out to tell the world. We were Mum and Dad to a beautiful baby girl. We had chosen her name, Emily Merle. Merle, after Sue's Mum. Emily weighed 3.54 kgs, was 55 cm long and had 37 cm head circumference. She got her BCG injection the next day. Sue's Dad placed the birth announcement in the Christchurch newspaper the next day.

Emily 3 Months at Mele Beach

Sue stayed in the hospital for the next 3 days. In typical Island fashion, her stay was full of drama. We had booked a two-bedroom. But there was a Ni Vanuatu lady who had bad baby blues and was safely locked away in that room. Sue was put into the main common ward, in this lady's bed as it turned out. Later that day the lady broke out of the room and ran back to her bed where Sue
was and climbed out of the window above her bed. The nurses thought she had taken our baby with her, luckily she hadn't. Sue was shifted into the two-bedroom with a Fijian mother in the other bed who had just had a child but was sick with malaria (She moved out after just a day)

An earthquake came the next day after birth, caused much commotion. There was screaming and Ni Vanuatu mothers picking up their babies and running outside. Sue calmly stayed in her room with Emily, and watched the walls shake. The following evening Sue was allowed to go home. However, that day we celebrated in the hospital room with visitors and lots of flowers and congrats cards, adorned the shelves and tables.

Emily lived in the cradle in our room and both of us learned parenthood skills. Poor Sue, feeding Emily was not easy and gave her little sleep. Martha, our house girl was a great help, keeping the house in order. She called Emily, "Rose", and was very pleased that Missus now was a proper woman with a baby.

Soon after Emily's arrival home, we installed a telephone of sorts. The phone lines didn't go as far as our place. We got a radiotelephone. It was a two-way radio. We spoke into a microphone with a talk switch on the side and heard the call over a small loudspeaker. We called our station Mele Beach. To make a call, you called the post office radio station Malapoa on the edge of Pt. Vila. So the call would start, "Malapoa, Malapoa, Mele Beach, Mele Beach". And if we were lucky the radio station would answer and then dial the number we wanted and we would be connected. The radio frequency we were on was the same as the plantations on Efate. It was like a party line. You heard everyone's conversation, as we had to leave the radio on, in case we heard, "Mele Beach, Mele Beach", to answer a call. We got to know what was happening on the plantations and the gossip.

Sue and Emily 1 year old at Mele Beach

Life with Emily meant little sleep and a lot of noise if her demands were not met. She enjoyed cool baths in her red plastic bath and lying on her Kiwi sheepskin. Sue, a good Kiwi mum, kept a Plunket Book, in which she recorded Emily's progress. These are some of the early entries;

6 June 83, age 12 'Z2 weeks, weight 5.70 looking at hands

9 July 83, laughed a little and again

14 July 83 Blowing raspberries

6 Aug 83 sucked a chicken bone, rolling over the first time

10 Aug 83 tried some paw paw

13 Aug 83 rolling over quite a lot, tooth peeping through front bottom gum. Gave Emily some cooked apples, and liked it. Gave Emily some apple in muslin to suck on.

23 Aug 83 second tooth through, tried mashed carrots

23 Sept 83 trying to pull herself up, great at sucking now

16 Nov 83 Emily has been trying to stand by herself for the last week — few seconds, started clapping her hands

25 Nov 83 started crawling

23 Jan 84 Emily is standing by herself, taking very small size steps. Eats everything given to her points with leer index finger, has been doing since Christmas.

17 Feb 84 Emily walking a lot more, quite steady

1 April 84 Gave Emily her last breast-feed. At this stage only an early morning. Feed.

13 June 15 months. Took Emily to the doctor while in Christchurch for a check-up. The only problem that might be later is OBESITY.
10 Oct 84, 19 months, speaking a lot to me, still using dummy, trying to jump and succeeding every now and then. Trying to potty train not succeeding, eating well.
Emily 37
15 Nov 84 Emily's first haircut.
10 Jan 85 Says Emily properly for the last 2-3 weeks, used to be Emy.
Emily was a happy little person and enjoyed being pushed around in her pushchair, looking at all the sights and babbling to herself.
She had fine blonde hair and very pale skin. She also could demonstrate that she had a mind of her own.
Occasionally I call Emily, Fish. I like to think that she was conceived while we were swimming in the beautiful waters of Champagne Bay, in Santo.

Now we are Three

A new dimension added to my shared journey. A baby girl, Emily now became the new focus on our lives. During Sue's pregnancy we tried to anticipate what changes we would have to face with the baby coming along. However, more attention was put into the birthing and sundries things needed when the baby finally did come along.

Now, a new life was ours to look after and nurture. It's quite a dawning of a realisation that parenthood is a big deal! The early months of Emily's life were divided up into events. First the stage of getting the breastfeeding to work, the demands of demand feeding. This wears thin on patience and nerves as Mum and Dad drift day into the next day with minimal sleep. Soon it's time to brag, "Emily sleeps through the night now!" (Even if it was only one night in five.) Then the first tooth appearing is celebrated. Naively, thinking that Emily's complaints of it bursting through is over. Ha! There are more teeth ready to do their stuff where the first one came from. Introduction to solid food becomes a talking point between parents and of course, Emily, breastfed, was with the later starters on this. Then sitting up and rolling over to at last crawling at so many months of age, is what is bragged about the most at this early stage.

After all, it seems to reflect how bright a person you have brought into this world. Those first steps are broadcast to all friends and family with much pride. Emily will not remain on all fours for the rest of her life. The first utterance of Mama, Dada causes nods of full understanding from proud parents. Emily learned very quickly that all that needed to be done to get something passed to her was, to utter Mama, Dada and point with her stubby fingers, then scream if we didn't react fast enough! Why she bothered to progress in speech I don't know, after all, this method got her whatever she wanted. It was the dummy that ruled the household. The Americans called them pacifiers, and that's what they do. Emily had a favourite and would not accept any other substitute. If we couldn't find this well-chewed original, anger would take control of Emily. Nothing would pacify this noisemaker, but the original, spares were a waste of time. Emily could detect a fake immediately, and spit it out in disgust.

Sues friend Anne from Timaru, came up to Vila with another girlfriend for two weeks. They stayed at a hotel in town for the first week and the second out at Mele Beach with us. Emily was still quite small; however Sue got to have a few girls' night out and remembered there was a life outside of the immediate realm of the baby. Anne took a scuba diving course and back in New Zealand spent many weekends diving.

A baby also placed us socially into the world of expats with small families. This was a nice thing about living in Vila, as we were all

away from family and the usual advisors on baby matters, we relied on each other. The mother's group monitored Emily's health and growth and supported Sue. Also, Sue met and found good friends amongst the mums. Sue and Graham Webb, Aussies who had lived for some years in PNG became close friends. I got on well with Graham. He was an Aussie stock and station salesperson from outback Queensland and did the same work up in Lae, PNG, and now had opened his shop in Vila. He knew the outback; they both had a good sense of humour. They didn't hide their emotions when they discussed things with each other. We got used to these explosions and sat quietly waiting for normality to return, and then continued on talking with them. It was just the way they noisily worked together.

When Emily was seven months old, we decided to take her travelling. It was our first holiday together for eighteen months. We planned to see all the family in Australia.

A Pushchair and a suitcase full of Emily's stuff boarded the plane to Sydney.

We spent some time with Cory and Helen in Melbourne. Dined at Pizza Hut with the two families. (Sue used to work at Pizza Hut. After Pt Vila finding fast food places were a novelty for us now.)

In Tassie, we stayed with Mum and Dad and they doted over Emily. Mum added an extra treat to Emily's dummy by coating it in sugar before popping it into her mouth. We visited Friends in Launceston and met up with Dirk and Elsa in Ross. Ross Township is in the midlands of Tasmania. We dined in an old restaurant with Elsa's sister Annette and her husband; Emily slept in her basket nearby.

Making kids, seemed to be the past time of most of my friends at this time.

We took the Train to Alice Springs from Adelaide and stayed with Janet and Gerard. We travelled in a two-bed cabin. We emptied out a suitcase and put Emily's sheepskin rug in it, so Emily slept in her suitcase on the train to Alice.

Janet and Gerry now owned a house and were well settled in at Alice. We travelled the Ranges and checked out all the spots we knew so well. The desert draws you back. It was a good catch up and our links with Alice were still very strong. While we were there we asked Reverend Lamont to baptize Emily. Rev Lamont carried Emily up and down the aisle and said to the congregation that John and Sue were married here in this church about a year ago, then looked at 7-month-old Emily and said, maybe a bit longer ago than that! So Emily was baptized in The Flynn Memorial Church where we took our vows.

We flew over to Brisbane to meet up with Cynthia and Russell and kids. (Cynthia was Sue's bridesmaid). We also dropped in to visit Kay. Kay was a senior lady who used to work at Sue’s favourite pub, when

she lived in Brisbane. Kay lived on her own, with boarders. She was a good friend to Sue, and a bit of a mother figure.
We met up with Arne and sister Joanne on the Gold Coast. Now Sue had met all my family. Joanne, (Haneke) and Arne and young boys had moved to the Gold Coast when I first went to Alice. Arne had various things on the go, but mostly spent his time building yachts. He had just completed building a trimaran. It was trailer sailor about 26 ft. We went for a sail on it on the Broadwater. This area of Queensland seemed not such a bad place to live in after all!
Back down to Sydney, where we met up with Stephen, my Ni Vanuatu workmate from Vila who had come over to Sydney to have some training. This was his first visit to Australia. He coped reasonably well with the culture shock. I took him on the city underground train loop. He nearly turned white with fear. The Ferry Trip on the Harbour went down well, he could relate to boats. We went to Old Sydney Town, a historic village. Stephen was utterly amazed at burning coal in a fireplace in one of the old cottages.
Rocks that burn was amazing, but the chimney was an excellent idea, he had not seen one in a house before!
After 5 weeks of travel, we arrived back home, satisfied to have seen and done all that we wanted to, but also very pleased to get back into our normal routine. The wet season had started, the humidity high, and our life moved to that slow tropical pace. Emily was back amongst her toys and familiar surroundings again. Pointing with her finger and Martha the house girl obliging.
Just before Christmas, a cruise ship, the Fairstar, arrived in port. Bob and Sharon from Christchurch were on board. They had a day in Vila and we showed them around. Sharon was an old high school friend of Sue. Bob was some years older than Sharon and had served in the Solomons during the Second World War. Their young daughter, Julia, was with them; she is just a bit older than Emily. So the four of us paraded through the main street of Vila. Bob and I, pushing small blonde girls in pushchairs. Sue would introduce Bob, Sharon and Julia to people we knew, you could see the puzzled look on their faces trying to work out where Bob fitted into the picture. He would proudly tell them he was Julia's dad! I had met Bob and Sharon on our way to Vila, so it was nice to have someone we knew, to show off the place too!
Our second Christmas and New Years was celebrated with our English friends. Many we had met were to leave in the following year as their two-year terms were up. This included Mary and Graham, the Garlicks, Tranters, Debbie and Geoff Trebelco and Paynes. Most of the English on two-year terms were in Vila for that time without a break and were very keen to get back home. They had saved a bit and had

two months to get back. So a holiday on the way home was the talk of this Christmas season. We sang carols one evening, picnicked on the beach, and enjoyed restaurant Christmas dinners.

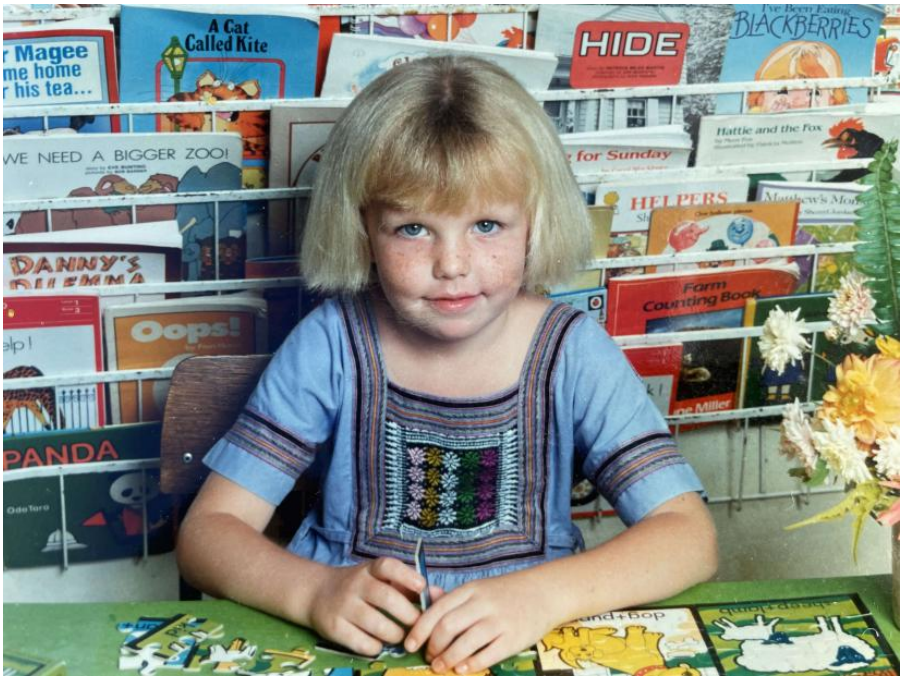
Behind our compound was a flat section of land, then small hills capped by a steep ridge, we called Clem's Hill. The flat land behind and the slopes of the lower hills were covered in native village gardens. The village ladies would tend these during the day. There were tracks through these garden plots that crisscrossed the whole area. Next door was the Old French Catholic Mission, now abandoned, behind which was an orchard of guava trees. Further towards the hill, as you walked along the village paths was a small Vietnamese cemetery. Many Vietnamese (Tonkonese they were called then) came out to work the French plantations in the early 1920's. Nearby was a small river, Mele River that started far up on Clems Hill and flowed down a waterfall and over many limestone cascades finally out to the sea at Mele Bay. The cascades and waterfall were accessible by a good walk. It was a beautiful walk through the cool waters of the river, over the steep cascades, past deep pools of cool water, to swim in the waterhole at the bottom of the waterfall. You could climb in behind the waterfall in a small cave and look through the sheet of water of the waterfall in front of you. Most of the river was covered in a canopy of jungle trees and vines. It was a nice cool place mid-summer. We swam in the cascades quite often. Mary's brother Phil and sister Pat came over from the UK to stay. So we took them to this favourite spot. Again with many other people over the years.

Emily on Sue's bike Mele Beach

Emily was a popular little person on our compound. She strutted around in a Tee shirt and nappies, chatting to everybody. For the first 10 months of her life, on the 10th of each month, we went down to a gift shop at the Hotel Intercontinental Resort and bought a small Beatrix Potter statue of Peter Rabbit and his
friends. We finished up with a nice little collection and later used these to tell Emily the Peter Rabbit stories. Emily enjoyed having books read to her and would expect this to happen most nights. Vanuatu did not have television, however, the video players were in use at most homes. We had playschool and other kids TV programmes taped for us from NZ or Australia. These Emily played over and over again and became very familiar with every word that was said.

Early on in the year, Dave, Charlie, Nick and I decided we were just too fat! So a competition to lose weight began. We had a 2- month target date. All of us went for an official weigh-in at the French Chemist. Dave being the biggest weighed in at 112 kgs and seemed surprised he weighed only that. We recorded our weight and were to meet every week at this time to keep a record. The following week, we all took our turns. Dave hadn't moved from 112 kgs, the rest of us had done well! The French chemist came over to see what all the fuss was about and said his weighing machine was perfectly ok. It just doesn't go past 112kgs. After this, we used Richard Stevens's scales at the fish market! Nick won, he lost over 25 kgs, I got down to 75 kgs, and over the next months found most of the lost weight again.

Emily's birthday was celebrated with a cake and one fat candle on it. She liked the cake and smeared it all over her fat cheeks. Many photos were taken to prove it!



Emily at the Library

I took a month off in late May as we were due for holidays after now being in Vanuatu for 2 years. We headed south to New Zealand. We flew into Christchurch and booked ourselves into a motel in Riccarton for a couple of weeks and travelled to see Sue's relatives to show off Emily. She could walk by now and eat anything. Dirk and Gonny had a crowded house in Christchurch. We left Emily with Gonny and went to Mt Cook Lodge for a few nights, to see the snow and enjoy the Alps. Ian and Audrey were back in Christchurch from living in Invercargill and they too now had a bouncy girl Kylie. Julie's daughter Kristie was now a long-haired little girl. Sue's Dad was now a Grandpa for sure! We just wanted a break in Christchurch with family, and that's what we did.

We decided to look at houses while in Christchurch and found one on Ferry Road in Woolston. It was a small two-bedroom room house with a long narrow backyard, 1300 square meters of land, and a small stream at the end of the backyard. I tried to get finance to buy it from NZ Banks. They all refused us, as we were not resident New Zealanders. We bought it subject to finance, giving us 3 months to find the money. Looking for a house and finding finance put stress on our holidays. Sue was a few months pregnant when we left for Christchurch. While she was there she miscarried. It was a sad loss and a sudden end to baby plans. We coped with the thought that the baby was just not right and not meant to come into this world. But it was a sad loss to new hopes.

When we arrived back in Vila, I spoke to Jeff Trebelco at Barclay's bank and it was no problem to get a personal loan for 2 years to pay off the house. It was as easy as that! I borrowed the money on a Friday and sent it down to our solicitor in Christchurch. It was done, that following Monday the New Zealand dollar devalued 20% after a change of government over the weekend. Had I waited a few days I would have saved quite a bit of money. Still, patience is a virtue.
Having a house in Christchurch gave us some direction in what we wanted to do. We intended to stay in PT Vila for only 2 years, now we wanted to pay this house off and then move down to Christchurch. So another 2 years in Vila was our new plan. Dirk rented the house out to two students from the country, all seemed well.
Sue lost a lot of weight during the months after she lost the baby. This gave her a chance to try new clothes and also hairstyles. Vila had a very talented hairdresser, and Frenchman called Frank. Frank worked in his mum's salon and was all you would expect to find in a creative French artist, frisky and gay. He liked working with Sue's hair, as it was thick and she had a lot of it. Some of Sue's hairstyles were the talk of the town.
Rob Oates, my old workmate from Hobart and fellow traveller came to Vila for a two-week holiday. Rob and I had travelled together in Europe and some years ago worked together in Hobart where we would dream of tropical holidays and sailing off into the sunset while drinking coffee in coffee shops. I wanted him to taste the expat life. We ran on the hash house harriers and he did down, down to the cheer of the crowd. We flew up to Santo and I showed him the sights, also a wreck of a 60 ft yacht that looked like it had potential for restoration. (Rob was into that idea.) He sailed our cat from Mele Beach into Vila Harbour a few times. One weekend we went to the north of Efate with the Bells (A New Zealand Couple) to go to their house girl's island, Emae. Emae is about 4 miles offshore. A small Island that was a mountain that rose out of the sea. We motored over, all of us on a 16ft old plywood half-cabin boat. There were some live pigs on board and produce, about 6 adults and kids, all jammed into this boat with an old outboard pushing it along. Rob couldn't believe our approach to water safety. On the Island, we were treated as guests and shown around the village, and native gardens, and sat down to a feed of native food. Tin fish and rice with Tuluk. Tuluk is made up of grated manioc mixed with coconut cream into a thick paste. This paste is rolled out like a fat pancake and bits of beef or chicken are placed in the middle of it, then it is folded up into a square little parcel and wrapped in banana leaves making a small package about 10 cms by 5 cms square and about 3 cms thick. This is left on hot stones to heat up. It is the most common Island delicacy. It tastes bland and is like

chewing on rubber. But you eat it in a local company, with much noise and telling all the smiling women around you how nice it is. Somehow, after much chewing it can be swallowed. The cascades behind our place were one of Rob's favourite places. He left the tropics to return to Hobart's winter. We wished him well.

Buying a car in Vila is an event. Cars are purchased new by government agencies and businesses through large traders. Either, Burns Philp or Ballande. There was an assortment of French cars imported from New Caledonia by Ballande and Japanese cars and Ute's via Burns Philp. We drove on the right-hand side, so British; Australian or New Zealand cars were not popular. Second-hand cars were well sought after. Second-hand car yards were non-existent. If you heard someone was leaving, you approached them to buy their car. In this way you could eventually get the car you wanted, by patiently waiting for the owner to leave and sucking up to them, to be the first choice. When the cars became old and not suitable for expats, they became taxis and somehow lived for many years until they fell apart with rust. Sue got a Nissan Pulsar sedan from the Shorter's. They were returning to New Zealand. So with a baby seat strapped in the back, off she went driving through the narrow streets of Vila.

A post office box was a status symbol. To have your private one needed much persuasion in the postal box pecking order. All mail in Vila is delivered to the central post office and distributed via the post boxes. At first, we used the NCR post box. An English couple were about to leave and out of the blue offered us their post box, 648. That was it. We took over the keys and it was ours. (You didn't advise the post office, as they would take it off you and give it to someone on a long list. The name our box was registered in, no one knew, so this box had passed through several hands.) The post office was the meeting place for all in Vila, as everyone would check their mail sometime during the week. Hang around the post office and you will meet everyone in Vila. The post office steps were just the right height for Sue and me. I would stand on the top step and Sue on the next one down, and we would snatch a kiss. So, romance has occurred on the post office steps.

Debbie and Jeff Trebilco returned to the UK, and Jeff sold me his Sailing dinghy. It was a 420. It had a mainsail, jib and spinnaker. To sail it you needed another person as crew who would control the jib and stretch out on the trapeze to keep the thing upright. The local yacht club sailed in the harbour on alternate Saturdays and Sundays. Jeff was a keen competitive sailor and during his last month, taught me how to sail. After he left I got an English guy, David Beattie to sail as my crew. The race would take about 2 hours and there would be about a dozen little boats in the race. It was serious stuff and a great

way to learn to sail. I became treasurer of the yacht club. This meant I was responsible for keeping the bar stocked, the beer cold and run the cashbook. The clubhouse was out on Malapoa, one of the harbour points. It was a simple concrete building with a small starter box on the roof for the race official. And a small hall and bar below. We kept our boats on the lawn next to the building. Vila harbour is reasonably large; it's simple to plan some interesting sailing routes. This depended on the direction of the wind, and if it was rough. The first time I took the 420 out, it was just after a cyclone had passed by. The sea was rolling waves about 2 to 3 meters high. I had this mad Frenchman as a crew. We headed off on a reach at full speed, the boat planned well and we were motoring. Then I turned the boat about. The Frenchman, out on the trapeze flew into the main sail and over we went. We got the boat upright, sails flapping; wind increasing and waves seemed even larger. I got the boat back to the club, eventually. The Frenchman thought it was great! I wasn't sure if sailing was my thing; it scared the living daylights out of me. I don't think I ever sailed in conditions like that first day ever again in Vila.

The nice thing about sailing is that it was a family affair. The ladies usually bought things to eat. We would have a Bar-Be-Que, and the kids would swim at a small sandy beach where we launched our boats. Sometimes we would have husband and wives sailing teams, Sue wasn't too keen so I would have a new wife for a few hours. Small boat sailing was very social. Like cars, sailboats were passed on.

Growing together in our married life meant moving through that period people call, settling in after the rush of early marriage passion. Yet for us, we moved into a more comfortable and content acceptance of each other. Living in Vila, the only town on a small Island, too far from any neighbours, can become claustrophobic. The people we socialised with were pleasant and some became close friends. However, we all felt we were transient, staying in Vila for a while, only to move on, or to get back home. Most of the conversations were about what we would do when we settled back home. The other aspect of Vila was the closeness and openness of other people's lives and habits. It was said that if you came to Vila to pep up a failing relationship, this was one place where it would end up on the rocks. We saw couples fall apart and play the field with other partners who were also not content with their existing relationships. Vila was a place where the men usually worked and the women found things to do during the day. Any expatriate had a senior position in business or an important government advisory position. We were all big fish in a small pond. Some people were professional about this social standing and others were very silly about their newfound status. (Trying to inflate yourself because of your professional position only made you

look ridiculous, yet some tried nonetheless). Sue and I didn't participate in the social status games, found no interest in the power to impress, and could ignore the scene. Fortunately for us, Sue and I were encouraged by friends with strong relationships, varied as that may be from couple to couple, our group were a group of people with a more settled approach to married life.

We wanted a break away on our own, a romantic interlude. Sue was again pregnant and starting to show a healthy bulge. This was a pregnancy to be taken at a more relaxed pace. .

It was May, we decided to have a couple of weeks off and take the train from Sydney to Alice. The Camel Cup was on and we felt like a break on our own. The train trip was 3 days, and 2 nights. We had a small cabin and this time Emily's bed was made between two suitcases on the floor. She had outgrown her suitcase as a bed. We dined in the dining carriage, looking out over the endless, brown, outback. Shrubs and gum trees, with the odd kangaroo bouncing about or just staring at us go by. The train stopped at Broken Hill. There was an organised 3-hour bus trip around Broken Hill and sights. This was the halfway point between Sydney and the South Australian turnoff to Alice, as this train continued to Perth. The Indian Pacific as this trip was called, left Sydney and 5 days later arrived in Perth. The route didn't go as far south as Melbourne and bypassed Adelaide by about 100 miles. Broken Hill (about 6000 population) was the largest town it passed through. The service on the train was great. The carriage attendant would bring a cup of tea to us in the morning to wake us for breakfast. Train travel on a long journey gives a good perspective on time. You are on this silver snake as it slides through Australia, and only it controls the speed it wants to go. Time, becomes not, how long to go, but rather, when we get there.

The Camel Cup was dusty and congested. About 30 camels raced the circular track, some deciding halfway around that that they were going the wrong way and running in the opposite direction. Camels are steered by a wooden peg on the side of their nose. I don't think any animal would like to be told where to go by being pulled by the nose. We camped out in the gorges in our swags, under the stars with Janet and Gerard, trying to keep warm through the freezing nights.

We arrived back in Vila just before Sue's 30" birthday. Sue's Dad was coming to visit us for a couple of weeks over this period.

Sue's Dad set off from Auckland the day before we set off from Alice. He stopped over in Nadi for a day. There, he stayed a night on the mainland of Fiji. It was Dad's first trip to the Tropics. I think Fiji was a good introduction with its multicultural, Fijian / Indian flavour. Paul Shirley picked Dad up from Vila Airport and he stayed with them until we arrived. We arrived home that evening. Dad settled into Mele

Beach pretty well and the change from winter in Christchurch to the warmth in Vila seemed to put a smile on his face. Dad has an ulcer on one of his ankles, tropical infection worried us, but he knew the tricks of keeping it a bay. We introduced Dad to the people we knew, Garlicks, Templeton, Webbs and people at work. We went off to a nakamal to drink some kava. It was the basic one in the hills behind town. A dimly lit shed and only the whites of the Ni Van's eyes reflecting back to us in the semi darkness of the nakamal. The Kerosene lamp burned on low, in the far corner. He got a taste for kava and took some home with him. I got him out in the 420 sailing dinghy for sail in the harbour. I don't think he had sailed much before, it was a calm day and a pleasant breeze, perfect for a first day out. Seeing Vila from the water on the harbour is a beautiful way to take in the sights.

We drove around the Island and stopped at Takara for lunch. This simple resort has a restaurant on the beach that overlooks pyramid shaped islands on the horizon. Just down the road we stopped at a quiet coral lagoon and took Dad snorkeling to see the small colourful fish swimming amongst the coral in shallow calm waters of the lagoon. I don’t think Sue could remember the last time she had seen him in the sea. But then again, this wasn’t Christchurch.

We celebrated Sue's 30" with a bunch of friends and Dad at a restaurant in town. The big 30 didn't seem to hurt Sue too much. A mile stone nether the less. Dad flew down to Tanna and battled stormy weather to get to the top of Yasur Volcano to stare into its depths. The small plane flight and grass strip at Tanna with a hill in the middle of it, put excitement in his bones.

It was a nice visit and great to have family with us in Vila. Emily now knew her Grandpa and started on the long road of getting to know him and learning his phrases of wisdom. Dad went back via Noumea. He met Gavin Black who drove him into Noumea for the afternoon. A nice way to see a bit of the French influence in the Pacific on his way back to New Zealand.

The natural elements and climate of the region kept you well aware of how vulnerable were all were to the forces of nature. The islands of Vanuatu were in a seismic region. We experienced tremors frequently and at times these would give a serious jolt. One day, I was driving back to work along the Mele road, when the car began to wobble; I thought I had a tyre blow out. Then I saw a wave pass through the road in front of me. It came from behind and traveled faster than the car forward of me. Everything moved up and down as the wave passed through the ground. Then, things settled down as if nothing had happened.

Torrential rainstorms happened frequently in the wet season. One day

we were walking along the road out a Mele Beach, It was a stormy cloudy day, in from the sea came a huge storm cloud squall. It was like a solid wall of grey rain. It came down the road toward us. First a rush of wind, then the wall of rain came towards us and engulfed us, a noisy, heavy waterfall!

The wet season brought cyclones. These monsters of havoc and destruction usually originated up in the Solomon Sea, and wove their way south, either to turn right to the Queensland Coast or turn east through the Vanuatu archipelago, then through Fiji to dissipate somewhere in the South Pacific.

The eye of the cyclone could take a route that had no pattern; they could stay in a location for days and then take off in any direction, sometimes to return to where they were a few days ago, building strength day by day.

Each wet season we were threatened by cyclones. While we were living out at Mele Beach, we were advised that a cyclone was on its way and to pass over our island of Efate. We had days of torrential rain and a steady wind from the northwest. It was just after 11 at night that the storm intensified, Tall coconut palm trees crashed to the ground in our front yard. The tall, bulky, native tree to the west of our house threw its branches over our house as the wind howled through it. We hastily packed a suitcase and strapped Emily into the car and drove past fallen trees, over the flooded Mele River concrete bridge into town. The Town was in darkness as the electricity was out. We wanted to move into one of the NCR flats, as this was a solid concrete building. When we arrived, we found Alain a French programmer from Noumea in one of the flats sitting on his bed with a torch in his hand. The floor was a pool of water. Part of the roof had collapsed. The 3 flats were like swimming pools. We took Alain with us and slowly made our way to the NCR house at Tassariki Park about 2 miles away. This house was on the lee side of a hill to the prevailing winds. Paul and Catherine Shirley put us up in solid bedrooms. We weathered the storm. The Cyclone passed by just to the north of Efate and flattened villages on the small islands of the Shepherds Group. Dave Garlick and I spoke to a pilot who took the Shepherds politician, Sethi Reganvanu for a flight to look at his home islands. The poor man came back devastated, in tears. The timeless destruction of cyclones, which these people, had lived through for generations, showed us all, the pain of loss, and later on, the rebuilding of hope.

NCR Pt Vila had gone through a change. John Nixon had bought the office building and it was rebuilt into a modern office with a showroom downstairs and three units upstairs. One flat, Gary lived in and the other 2 were for company visitors to stay in. Gary left NCR and Paul Shirley and his French wife, Catherine came to Vila. He was

the programmer for the Banking System we sold. He had been living in Noumea for some time and I knew them from earlier days in Noumea. Bill Saville and His wife Carol also came to Vila with their two young girls. Bill became the new Manager. A young computer engineer, Rod McKenzie from Invercargill arrived later to help me, and to be a relieving technician in Pacific the group. John Nixon's little empire was substantial in Noumea, Vila and Honiara in the Solomons. We all got on reasonably well, except for Paul and Bill. They had worked on different projects in Noumea; the personalities didn't blend too well.

Keeping healthy in Vila was a real challenge. The chance of getting the flu was always there. People would be coming back from their homes with some European strain of the flu, which always spreads well in the tropical climate. Malaria came in bouts that ranged from a stiff headache to a flat out on your back sweating for 5 days. Food poisoning was the luck of the draw, but sores turning to infected ulcers were by far the most common ailment. I had cut my foot on some coral and didn't worry about putting disinfectant on the cut. Days later it became infected; I still didn't worry about it. I got mild pain in my groin and thought about seeing the doctor in a few days. On Saturday it started to hurt, I started to shiver from my fever and sweated water. I collapsed and fainted. Sue, very pregnant, rushed to get help from a neighbour, who drove me to Dr. Bott.

After jabs of penicillin, and Bott telling me I should not have left it that long, I patched up and moved back home. It was a lesson in how fast you can deteriorate with blood poisoning.

We had been living out at Mele beach for nearly 3 years now and with the second baby coming on and Emily ready for kindergarten, we started looking for a place back in town. Also, the neighbours and friends we first met in the compound had moved on, things had changed and we needed a change. Kindergarten could start under the French system at the age of 2 years and 9 months.

We found a nice modem house, on a ridge just above the wharf road, overlooking the harbour into the town centre. It was a beautiful location and had full-time electricity. Barclays Bank people were living in it and going back to England around the time our baby was to be born. We shifted in when Sue was nearly due. Dr. Bott said we were mad, to shift at Sue's stage, but we did it anyway.

There wasn't too much to shift across, as this house was furnished too. The neighbours were closer now, so we decided to keep the noise down a bit. We have a habit of raising our voices a bit when a necessary point has to be made.

The three years at Mele Beach were a time of a simplistic lifestyle with the minimum comfort of a developed world. We had space and time to

be with each other and learned to live with each other. We enjoyed the friends and friendships we made, but we could also enjoy our own company and our own family life. Not having financial problems and even saving some money, helped. It was through these first few years of our married life, that we were blessed with confidence in our relationship. We had a journey to share.

Robert

When it came time for Robert to be born, we were better organised. Early Saturday morning, Sue started to feel contractions and this time it was the right time. We had breakfast, went for a walk with Emily along the beach at La Lagon resort, into town to buy Emily a talking doll, and then off to the Webb's out at Mele Maat to spend the afternoon there. Emily was to stay with the Webbs while Sue was in Hospital. We arrived; Graham jumped about nervously hoping Sue wouldn't drop the

Robert at Eton Beach West Efate.

baby there and then on the front lawn. (Sue Webb had her children through cesarean and Graham had not gone through this stage before)

Sue Webb is also a double certificate nurse; we felt this was the best place to be. Graham got the barbeque out and the cold beer and set to work. Dr Bott was out playing golf and not to be disturbed. Finally, we said our farewells to the Webb's, squeezed Sue into the car and set off to the hospital. Dr. Bott came in after golf and said he would be back later in the evening as he was going out to dinner. He was wearing his best clothes and asked Sue not to get his shirt dirty. This time Sue had the right clothes on to give birth. Time ticked on as Sue lay on the birthing table; finally, Bott arrived, and soon after out popped Robert. It was a great moment. It was 10:30 on Saturday night

21 Sept 1985. He weighed 3.94 kgs about 57 cm long and 39.5 cm around the head. He was all there and howled well. I stayed with Sue for a while and then went across the road from the hospital to Dr. Bott's place and had a few drinks with Bott and his PNG chemist friend. Bott said Sue performed well and didn't jump about on the table too much. I assumed that Sue rated well that night.

Robert coconut husks at copra hut North Efate

I had now been through two deliveries with Sue. The process that a woman has to go through to give birth, to bring a new life into this world is something that can only leave great admiration in the heart of the father. Giving birth is a natural event for a woman that goes back to the start of time, one of those events that bring the ancient to the present. Comfort is all that a man can give at this time, and that is the last thing on her mind, it is left to the deep resources of femininity to get her through. Then, the sheer joy of achievement overwhelms all the turmoil of birth, as the new child and mother are together at rest after the birth.

I bought a bottle of French white wine at Ballande for this occasion. t was well-aged and looked good. With that in hand, I turned up at the Webb's at about 2:00 am and announced the arrival of Robert. Poured out the wine and it tasted like onion juice. The Webb's drank a bit of it, and then got out a nice bottle of Champagne and we toasted to Robert and Sue again. (I have been reminded of my wine choices by the Webb's for years after this, "don't let John buy the wine!"). I went to bed in our new house, and with much noise, announced to the

world that Robert, our son, was born. It's a great moment to get the joy of our family through our telephone to the rest of our families. This time I took a good bottle of champagne in to see Sue and Robert. Some entries in Robert's Plunket book are;

Mary our Housegirl house above the Wharf Pt. Vila.

11 November at 7 weeks, Few smiles since 5 weeks, seems to be sleeping through as from 13 Nov

At 8-9 weeks smiling a lot. Sucking his thumb, but not for long.

25 Nov 9 weeks weighs 6.21 kgs. 62 cm long Head 42 cm.

30 Dec A few laughs

13 Jan 86 Looks around a lot of Laughs at Emily always watching Emily

21 Jan Still fully breastfed, holds toys for a small time. Rolled over.

10 March 86 51/2 months Getting up on his knees and rocking backwards and forwards

17 March Now sleeping in his big cot

7 April 6.5 months started crawling

14 April Pulled himself up and tried to walk a little around furniture. Eats small amount of solids

26 June Sometimes says Mama, took 2 —3 steps

30 June Walking quite a bit

1 Sept Walking flat out, doing a lot of climbing, Bit of a mischief, still a happy chappie.

30 Jan 87 Stopped breastfeeding, He didn't like that, but got used to the idea.

16 Feb 87 Had a fall, cut his forehead lots of blood, but a small cut, we went to Vila hospital but no stitches.
20 Feb 87 First hair cut.
25 April Had a fall 2 stitches in the back of his head, talking a lot more now.
21 September 87 2 years old 90 cms tall weighs 12 kgs.

Robert makes four

The shift back into Vila made quite a difference to our lifestyle. Being closer to shops and work, it meant a lot less planning to see people, shop, and a trip into town, so things just got busier. The Webb's moved in from Mele Maat and shifted into a house just below ours. We had a hole through the fence to get between the two places. The Webb's house belonged to the Presbyterian Church. It was a wooden house, built on a platform that jutted out from the steep hill. The view from the front veranda was over the harbour and city. Graham and I had a few beers and many stuffed olives from a tin, watching the sunset from the veranda. Paul, an Australian Insurance agent lived down the road from the Webbs. He made bar-be-que bacon and eggs for breakfast with chilli-fried onions. This with beer, was a way to great the day! Next door to us lived the Van der Goots, Wiepke was married to an Indonesian lady, Ida, and they had 3 kids, their youngest was a girl about 5. Wiepke was also the official Dutch representative in Vanuatu and ran the EEC funding. He was a keen sailor and a real family man. Just up the driveway in front of us was another house the same as ours with two Sri Lankan ladies. Robert would walk up the drive and visit them. One day he picked chillis

Emily with Robert at 3 months

off their chilli bush on the way, and arrived at their place, spitting, gasping and screaming. The ladies filled him with fruit salad and brought him home. I think they had a good supply of biscuits, which tempted Robert and Emily.

At the yacht club, I met Jock
and Dawn Hannaford. He was a keen sailor on his fast Fireball. It needed a good crew to keep it upright in good winds, but when the conditions were good, it won. Jock was also a keen amateur radio enthusiast or HAM as they call themselves. I got into that too. I did a Morse code course with Jock and got a full transmission license. Jock sold me his radio and the station YJ8JG was on the air. I had a big beam ariel on a pole, strapped to the side of the house. It looked like an oversized TV Ariel. The best time to transmit was from 4 in the afternoon to about 7 at night. I could get calls into countries in Europe and to some USA hams. This was not a good family time to be on the air, kids and tea time. I kept a log of all the contacts I made, as all hams have a call sign that was logged. At times we exchanged cards. A call conversation would start with exchanging the signal strength and clarity of reception, then what gear we were using, the weather, and if it went well some common interests. Vanuatu only had about 6 active hams at the time, so many overseas hams were keen to make contact with me and exchange cards. I was considered a rare contact. Later, I gave courses on radio electronics and Jock and I built up a group of about 6 other new licensed hams.
The Cruising Yacht Club of Sydney wanted to hold a race from Sydney to Vila via Noumea. We formed a committee called RECAVAN. This was made up of the Vila yacht club commodore David Ludas and about four Ni Vanuatu key people in the public service and me as secretary. It was a big event, with about 15 boats in the race. We combined the prize-giving with a water carnival in the seafront Park in town. We had swimming races, a VMF band, a local radio DJ broadcasting and lots of local food stalls. It went well. Lots of fun. There is a 2-meter Tam Tam with a plaque on it commemorating the race in the Cruising Yacht Club rooms in Rushcutters Bay Sydney. Jock and I had a regular evening and morning radio schedule with the yachts as they were racing, to keep their positions recorded. We pinned these up in a local shop window and mapped the progress of the race. John Nixon in Noumea, with his boat, met and ran the Sydney to Noumea finish line, and started the race off Noumea to Vila. The Ni Vanuatu people on the committee did a lot of the work for the Carnival, and later, became prominent politicians. It was nice to have worked with these people when they weren't highly ranked.
Emily started Kindergarten at an English Laidie's small home kindergarten. Her name was Linda Dwyers, she had about 20 kids in her class, aged from 3 to 5 years old. Emily enjoyed her kindy years and developed a cultured English accent. The Webb's, who were in Vila for the long term, sent their kids to the French primary school, which had its kindy. The kids could speak French well and David, who

was a little older than Emily, would rattle off in French with a lovely rolling accent, and then drop into a strong Aussie accent when speaking English. Bishlama, the local Pidgin English was also a language the kids were familiar with, as the house girls spoke Bishlama to the kids.

The Mottrams, Aussie people, who lived in another Presbyterian house in front of us, rented a small house on an Island in a lagoon about an hour's drive east of Vila. The Webbs and the Mottrams and we joined in with paying the monthly rent of this hut. The Island was called Iriwiti and was about 2 acres in size. This Island was in the middle of a lagoon that was sheltered from the ocean by a coral reef. The beach on the island facing the mainland, was soft powdery, white sand. The water is shallow and warm. It was the ideal place to spend the day with small children. Years ago a Frenchman had built about 8 huts on this Island and named them all after Asterix Characters. These were basic with no electricity. Ours was called Oberlix. We hired this hut between 4 families. The boat trip to the island was about 300 meters. At low tide, the water was about a meter deep and we would wade across and pull the boat laden with food, small kids and drink behind us. Most of the time we would go with the Webb's and meet up with others on the Island. We had a gas barbeque and water on the Island. The little hut served more as a shelter and storage place.

Once, Sue and I with Robert and Emily slept in it for a night. Large crabs would come in through the gaps in the walls and you would hear them walking across the concrete floor. Once was enough, for a night stopover. We stuck to day trips. At full tide, the lagoon filled up and we used to take the little boat powered by a small seagull outboard for a trip along the mangrove trees and out to the reef to see fish in the clear waters.

Robert in front of the Obelix Hut

It was a very pleasant spot, away from tourism and simple enough to enjoy. The hardest part was packing up and wading the 300 meters back to land. Always tricky after much food and drink, then to drive home all sticky and salty to race into the shower.

Hospitality was still quite active amongst the expats. We were invited to people's places for dinners and they came across to our place. The main topic of conversation was local gossip, and trips, planning trips away. Sue and I were now moving in the circles of people who had a more long-term desire to live in Vila. We now had that in view and

the original idea of 18 months to 2 years
stay, had passed by some time ago. We now started thinking of moving on when Emily needed to advance in her schooling. There was also a drop off in English short-term expats, coming over on aid schemes. By now our friends were mostly Australian and Kiwi
My work had changed its name from NCR to PacTec. Rod McKenzie, the young NCR technician from Invercargill (The farthest south you can live on New Zealand's South Island) became the floating technician between Noumea, Vila and Honiara. He lived in the flat above work, was single and seemed to get on well with everyone. He bought a Laser sailing dinghy and was a popular racer at the yacht club. He became a consistent Hash House Harrier runner and pilot. He took flying lessons in Vila and together with Jean-Claude Mittrid (a small Frenchman), and Paul Shirley built an Ultralight aeroplane. It was the talk of the town. They took it on a few test flights, and then Paul Shirley decided to fly out to Devils Point and back. So he and Jean-Claude flew out to Devils Point and on the way there, dumped it into the sea. It was a wreck. Rod had a more sensible approach to flying and continued flying in fixed-wing aircraft.
Rod was a true Southlander, he rolled his r's like the Scots and very patriotic towards New Zealand. A bit clumsy, and very polite to women. He was also a keen scuba diver and had dived in the cold waters off Southern New Zealand. The Vila Dive club suited him; he socialised mostly with the single men in Vila.
Rod and I didn't work together for long periods as he was away in other areas while I was in Vila and returned to Vila when we were away.
When we were together, Rod, Paul and I would meet for a coffee at 10 am, at the La Terrace Café. This habit, was part of our PacTec Vila culture.
This was probably one of the more settled times we had in Vila. We enjoyed our house, had a relaxed social life and kept busy with our two children. Robert was a reasonably easy baby and very quick at getting to a crawling stage. The floor in the house was made of terra cotta tiles and very slippery. Robert could slide around the rooms from wall to wall and get to wherever he wanted to go in no time. He also had his bedroom from the start, so we could ignore him at times and close the doors and not hear him.

Sue and Emily at Obelix Hut

Our favourite nearby beach became a small resort at the mouth of the main lagoon called Erakor Island. It was once a mission station with a church. The trip out to it took 5 minutes on a flat-bottom ferry, which dropped you off on a sandy beach. This in itself was a pleasant trip as we glided over reefs and fish could be seen swimming over
patches of white sand. The resort sold chips hamburgers and cold beer. It also had shady trees overhanging the beach, easy to spend a few hours in the shade, spread out on the soft sand. Just across the water from the other side of the island is Erakor village. Watching the local life on their beach was also a way of passing time.

Once a year there was a family Hash Run. We would start in the centre of town and finish back at the same spot. This was very helpful as it was considered legal and an art, to shortcut the run to find a quicker way home. One of the rules was that at any time in the run, if you could see the finish you could head straight to it. Sue and I did this family-run with Robert on my shoulders and Sue running with Emily. I took a shortcut and got back early with Robert to drinks and food, Sue, of course, did the run correctly and came back sore and tired.

I think Emily realised that our part was very short.

I was invited to join the Free Masons. It turned out that several people I knew were in the Lodge. Vila had an English Lodge of the Blue order. I worked through the stages of apprentice, mason to master mason, and was treasurer of the lodge for a while. It was an interesting time and required a lot of memory work to recite long passages of ritual. After the meeting, we would sit together and have a meal and social evening. There were about 40 regular attendees, half

British and the rest Australians and Kiwis, Dutch and a Ni Vanuatu. These were men from all areas of society, and I think they saw themselves as a community service organisation with high morals and virtues. The only thing was that this was not a dry Lodge and the after-meeting drinks could build in number. Sometimes the drive home was by instinct. Vila, late a night was very quiet on the roads and drunk driving was not an offence, but a silly thing to do. The ritual and order of the Lodge equated to church life and I saw parallels in this, however, it became evident that the Grand Architect could be any higher being you wanted to choose. Many Anglican Church people were Masons, and this gave it Christian credibility. The meetings were held once a month in a small lodge hall on the airport side of town. The ladies of the Lodge members would also meet and go off to a restaurant for the night. It was their night off too! Sue was friendly with a lot of the wives before I joined. Once a year we would invite non-members to a dinner. This would be about 160 people. It was one of the big events of the year. The only black-tie event left in Vila, with pomp and ceremony. Some of the Lodge members took masonry seriously and went on to make a career of it when they moved on. Vila was a place where you could advance very quickly to a high position, which you could carry on to another lodge. The French also met in the same lodge hall, but their masonry was considered inferior. (How British can you get!). Their regalia looked smart, with long shiny swords at each person's side, a bit like the Musketeers.

Our church life in Vila was irregular. We attended the Paton Memorial Presbyterian Church at times. This church was built like a large A-frame, with the sides opening up to allow a breeze to pass through. The men sat on one side and the women on the other.

Crossing the lagoon to Obelix Hut Island

Expats were seated up the front and could sit together. The service was in Bishlama and also the songs were. A choir of about 12 people led the singing, with no musical instruments. It was easy to sing along, as the songbooks were older hymns, translated into Bishlama.

The service would take about an hour and a half. Afterwards, people would go outside and sit under the shade of the trees on the grass and socialise. Easter and Christmas were special services with much singing and part of the service outside on the grass. The Paton church had been in Vila for some time, there was also an Anglican Church and a large Catholic Church that catered for the Francophones. Later we found out that there was also a small Pentecostal church that some bible translator expats attended.

On our trips back to Australia or New Zealand, we attended church regularly, however in Vila we did not find a home church. Our friends were nominal Christians, and at this time we had become nominal too.

Holidays came up again in July 86. This worked out well as Mum and Dad was to celebrate their 40" wedding anniversary in Melbourne. All the family were to attend. We planned to go to Melbourne for a week, then across to New Zealand for a camper van holiday from Auckland to Christchurch.

Cory and Helen's place in Dandenong Victoria was the venue; we stayed with Janet and Gerard at Helen's Mum and dad's house. (They were away in Queensland). It was a good family time, Arne and Haneke, Dirk and Gonny and faintly were there. We celebrated the

anniversary in a Chinese restaurant and had family portrait photos taken. Everyone was there, except for Ron. Dad's health was not the best, but he seemed overwhelmed with all his family and grandchildren around him. Mum enjoyed all the attention too! It was one of those special events when everyone came together and towards the end, we wondered if we would get together like this again.

We picked up the camper van in Auckland and set off on a winter's journey up to the Northlands region, down through the middle of the North Island to cross the ferry to Picton on the South Island, then drive down to Christchurch.

We bought a portable cot in Auckland that fitted down the centre of the camper van. That worked well for Robert. Travelling in a camper van with small kids is great. We could walk through from the front seat into the van area in the back. Emily could play in the back and sit at the dining table and watch the world go by through the back and side windows. Whenever we stopped, everything was there for kids changing, and feeding and no hassles. We stayed in camping grounds and found that in the middle of winter, there is no problem with getting a space to park the van. Many sites allowed the second night free. We saw much of the North Island scenery and swam in the thermal pools in Rotarua. I also backed into a truck there and put a small hole in the corner of the campervan. A bit of tape fixed that up.

At Wellington, we met up with Sue's sisters Kay and David. To get off the North Island I had to reverse the camper van onto the ferry. This was a challenge. The South Island was much colder at night. We stayed in a motel in Hanmer Springs, Murchison, and finally parked in Dirk and Gonny's driveway. The following Saturday both families piled into the Camper and we drove to the foot of a mountain pass over the Alps to the West Coast. This place was covered in snow. We slid down hills, built snowmen and threw snowballs, afterwards we drank Gonny's hot soup. Emily soon discovered that snow is nice to play in, but not for long, it's cold!

We spent time with Sue's Dad and Ian and Julie. Kava and the nakamal's of Vila were a distant memory. I’m sure Sue's Dad could remember that there is a place with warmth somewhere up north of New Zealand in August. I returned the camper van after a few days in Christchurch. Funny how the deposit was just enough to repair the small hole I made.

On Holidays in New Zealand. First time in the snow

We checked out our house at Ferry road, and took some photos of it and the back yard. It still looked like a nice little house to come back too; but when?

I had to leave New Zealand to get back to work; Sue and the kids stayed on for another two weeks at Dad's and Dirks's place. Sues Dad had his 60'" birthday. There was a family gathering and a night out in a

Christchurch restaurant. Emily got to know our Kiwi families a

bit better; Robert got the regular doctor's check-up. This holiday was one of the best in that we saw all our family. Also had a great camper van trip to see some of New Zealand's beautiful spots. I liked this country and could see myself living here one day.

Back to Vila to live through another wet season. The big event soon after returning was Robert's first birthday! I had made Robert a wooden trike, out on the veranda made a small play house. We invited the Webb's and some of Emily's friends and had a birthday cake.

Afterwards, a few families met on a soft white sandy beach east of Vila. Robert shifted heaps of sand with his new dump truck.

Iriwhiti Island at the Obelix hut, became our popular weekend retreat. We would meet the Webb's and Mottrams and laze the day away, sleeping in the shade of trees, squashing ants.

After work, we would go down to the Webb's, have a wine or beer and olives on their veranda, listen to Pavarotti sing and watch the movements on the harbour. The Webb's still had a loud way of

speaking persuasively towards each other, but we let it go over the top of our heads.
Emily returned to Linda Dwyer's kindergarten, spoke with an even more English accent, and became Robert's teacher.
Melbourne Cup day in November was the social event of the year for the ladies. It was celebrated at one of the better restaurants, with an outside garden. Ladies only attended, wearing their designed Race Day hat to suit the occasion. This was Sue Webb's day; she could make hats that would put Melbourne into a spin. The men usually picked up the women and knew takeaway's that night would be the only way to get the family fed. It was a champagne afternoon.
The Webb's were keen horse people. There were two horse-riding clubs in Vila. A French and an Australian club. Polo Cross was also a popular sport, Graham was a good horseman and his daughter Sally and son David were also good pony riders. Emily used to ride a pony out at the club at times. Emily's kindy had a Christmas party with Santa giving out gifts, and another at the horse riding club. We were into kid's parties. It was a great way to for me to catch up with other men and have a few beers at the end of the day. Picking up the kids from an afternoon party usually took some time, as Sue was usually already at the party relaxing with the other mums. Those nights were either a quick takeaway on the way home or let a full belly settle.
Saving was not too difficult living in a tax haven. After the house was paid off we saved for a holiday in Europe. I wanted to take Sue there and show her the places where I had lived. In a way this is
where she was heading when she met me, and why not get there?
Rob and Emily were manageable enough to travel with, so we put our energies into planning and saving for the trip.
I wrote to a cottage-letting agency in Britain. It was possible to rent country cottages a week at a time. We found cottages in areas of Britain near to towns or cities where our English friends from Vila had returned home too. In all, we booked 2 months of cottages from the south of England to northern Scotland. The Garlicks, Teskey's and Trebelco's wanted us to spend time at their places. Dave said he would buy a car in an auction close to the time we were to arrive. It was reasonably easy to organise. I could get 5 months off work, and there would be a job for me back in Vila,
The PacTec house on Tassariki Park became empty start of February. The Shirleys had moved down to Auckland to live. Since we were off to Europe in May, it was considered a good idea that we shift in until then. This was the house that I lived in when I was single. John Nixon had it built to be his home. It has a lovely garden and outlooks over grass paddocks onto the lagoon and jungle on the other side of the lagoon. A beautiful location. It also had a flat at the back of it. I set up

my amateur radio in there. And strung up a long, high aerial between neighbouring tall coconut palm trees. The area was excellent for radio. I could get contacts all over the world. We were in the house for only a week when disaster struck.

The weather had turned stormy; a cyclone had formed off the Solomon's and was gathering strength, heading towards Vanuatu. It was called Uma.

It was Friday; Vila had buckets of rainfall fall onto it. The local radio station gave out storm warnings and now was suggesting Vila was in for a cyclone. In the years we had been living in Vila, storm warnings had changed to cyclone warnings, but none had come close enough to our island Efate to cause damage. It seemed this one was meandering just to the northwest of Efate and could move over to Vila.

We stocked our house up with candles, and batteries, filled containers up with water and kept the radio tuned in. I finished work early on Friday and put up storm shutters on the office PacTec building windows. Sue and I spent a Friday night listening to the radio and weather checks on short waves from the Hawaii weather station, plotting Uma's course on a map. The Saturday morning, gusts of wind blew into Vila. I went to the yacht club and put the boats under the trees. The sea looked angry and violent. All the small coastal traders were anchored far up in the west of the bay. It was not safe to leave a ship tied to a wharf through a cyclone. Most of the business houses were shuttered and the streets were very quiet. I went home.

The torrential rain and wind gusts increased, and the electricity went off. Each gust intensified, trees began to throw their branches, and coconut palm trees bent over and threw their prongs off into the distance. Coconuts bounced across the paddocks and into the houses below us. The wind howled and then started to screech. Trees fell over in our yard and next door. It was getting dark and all we could see was sheets of rain. In the darkness, we heard more crashing as trees fell over or snapped apart. We could hear things bouncing off our roof, the far bedroom windows broke and the bedroom doors began to

slam open and shut. I made my way up the hallway and tied these doors shut. More trees crashing on the roof. We moved the kids down into the basement garage and made beds in the car. This was the most solid part of the house, if the house blew away, we would be underground. Being inside the car blocked some of the noise.
Rain poured, the wind screeched, and the four of us sat in the car, listening. This went on from about 5 in the afternoon; we were in the car at about 9pm and stayed there until 2am in the morning. The noise died down to a steady tropical rain pour. We moved up stairs and made a bed on the floor of the bedroom on the lee side of the house, and tried to sleep till sunrise.
Sunrise told us all. The yard was full of branches, fallen trees and bits of other people's houses. The house behind us had its roof blown off and that was what had bounced off our roof. The rain had stopped and calm had come back to Vila. We only had one bedroom with smashed-in windows, a coconut tree had fallen and the top of it had crashed through the windows. The roof had lots of dents in it but seemed safe. Men were walking down the road with chainsaws clearing a passage through the fallen trees and debris. No water supply, no electricity or phone. The Frenchman behind us who had a wooden colonial cottage, with many trees to shelter it for privacy, now stood in what was his house, few walls standing, no trees or shrubs, just a bare yard with his household items strewn all over the place. The trees that were still standing had broken limbs and no leaves on them.
We started tidying up and getting the house functional. Graham Webb came by later that morning and sadly told us of his family's plight. I jumped in the truck with him and headed off to his place to help.
We had been relatively sheltered from the brunt of the gusts, which tore through the town. At about 6 in the afternoon, The Webb's heard the front of their house collapse. They made their way to the back of the house as it was falling down behind them. Paul from next door made his way up to them when he heard the noise and helped Graham and Sue get the kids out of the house through the kitchen window. They got out just in time as a huge gust tore off their roof and threw it onto our old backyard, where we lived only a week before. Sue Webb got broken glass in her foot, which troubled her for months. When Graham and I got there it was heartbreaking, Sue and some helpers were picking through their stuff, trying to salvage what clothes and household items they could.
On the way to the Webb's, we drove through only one side of town. The steel power poles were bent flat to the ground. The harbour had boats and yachts littering the coastline. Broken boats and pieces of houses scattered along the shore. We drove past Steven's house; it was

only a floor with some parts of the wall standing. They moved from room to room with their kids as the house fell apart, finally getting some shelter in the shower unit. We heard many more stories as the day progressed. The torrential rain had caused many people's roofs to collapse, and mud had filled a lot of people's houses as silty water poured through their houses.

The toll on the yachts was very high. During the storm, boaties either left their boats to the mercy of the storm or motored out into the centre of the harbour to ride out the storm. Gary lost his trimaran, Jock lost his too. One guy, Popeye we called him, started to ride out the storm, lost control of his huge cabin cruiser and smashed up many boats as he was blown back along the quay.

Graham and Sue moved into the flats up stairs of work, only the roof of this flat needed repairing, Both Sues cleaned the water damaged flat and the Webb's started to come to grips with the trauma they had lived through.

Many of the business houses and banks were flooded. None of the computers were operational. These had to go through a drying-out period before we could test anything. The power in the main centre was off for about a week and it was two weeks before it came back at our place. We bought a small generator and got the water back on reasonably quickly. Gary and his girlfriend moved into the flat behind us, and the Webb's came over for showers, as we were one of the first to get water back.

It was an emotionally troubled time. We tried to humour each other and laugh at the state we found ourselves in, but the harsh reality and devastation we were left in, broke the spirit of us all, at times. Help came in from France, Australia and New Zealand. Free flights for families to Brisbane. (Then what!) Tents for immediate housing relief. Water had to be boiled as cholera out break was rumoured.

As the telephone service was down, we started amateur radio contact with a disaster relief group in Australia and could get messages back to families that their people were OK. We had a notice board of family names in a local Chinese shop of some families overseas who wanted information on how their Vila relations were getting on. They would leave a message at the shop and we would send a message to the Australian amateur radio group who would phone the relatives. This went on for about 8 days until a phone link was up again, that non-essential services could use.

The community spirit grew and, commerce and government started to function again. So did the insurance claims, and this brought in tradesmen to rebuild the place. My 420 yacht blew away from the yacht club lawn. An insurance assessor came to the club with me and took a photo of the grass patch where it had been resting before the

storm. (I think one of the islanders may have used it to get home, and it now lives under one of their trees. We sold many computers and photocopiers due to water damage these paid for by insurance claims. Business became good, and importing products to sell, kept the airport very busy. It was the uninsured who had to make do with what they could. Vila looked very sore and tired.

The trees were stripped bare of leaves, and the birds had left town. After a week, buds appeared on the trees and bushes; nature was at work coming back to life. The stormy seas had battered the coastline. The Beach we knew so well out at Mele Beach was carved up and parts of the road washed away. I heard from the scuba divers, that many of the local reefs were broken and full of broken coral pieces. The blocked-up drainage system in the town began to stink, the heat and humidity played on people's tempers, and the mosquitoes thrived.

The small dinghy we used to ferry stuff and kids over to lriwhiti Island was smashed in the cyclone, also the small house Obelix on the island along with most of the others was badly damaged. The owner suggested no one go there until they are repaired, possibly a year from now. There was a definite period now, "before and after" the cyclone. Sue and I felt an era had come to an end and we looked forward to our European holiday.

Emily turned 4 at Tasariki, and we celebrated with most of her kindy class and friends over for the party. Robert by now was into parties and cake and good at getting in the way of the bigger kids. He took it all in his stride and remained happy and still smiled a lot.

We started to focus on the European trip. Confirmations of the cottages came in the mail, and a cheque was sent off to pay for them. The air travel was booked and confirmed. We moved into the flats above work, stored all our stuff in the basement. Started to count down the days to Departure day.

Europe

Leaving Port Vila on the tarmac

It had finally come to that night before. We had already been living in the flat on top of work for a few days and the last, leftover bits and pieces were packed away in big boxes to be stored down in the basement for the next five months. Our four suitcases, bulging, neatly in a row, waiting for the early, getaway tomorrow morning.

It was a warm evening, some rain had fallen, and the dogs and radio across the road entertained us while we ate the last bits of Chinese takeaway. With Emily and Robert jumping on the beds, and Sue washing the dishes, I decided to go for a stroll down to the corner Chinese Wong Store.

The alarm rang and the rush of a long day began. Rod drove us to the airport Jock and Dawn caught up with us in the transit lounge, they wished us bon voyage. Then up the aircraft stairs, we walked waving goodbye to Linda and Joanne Mackin, into the Air Caledonie Caravel jet.

Robert took turns on our laps and seemed to enjoy exploring the possibilities of his new surroundings. Emily, in the window seat, watched the clouds and told us that Joanne Mackin had been on this plane too. Noumea was a short transit stop. French flags and a few

more passengers.
The breakfast filled us all and was also scattered on the rest of the spare space around our seats! Sydney on the horizon, soon we saw the Harbour Bridge, and then bump, we were down in Australia.
It must have been a slow start to the weekend in Sydney; it seemed forever until the spray can man came to clean us all before we got off the plane. He ordered the baggage lockers to be opened and then covered us with sweet-smelling stuff. We sat in silence waiting for the signal to exit quickly. The spray can man didn't perform for us again until months later on our trip back
Sydney transit stop consisted of nappy changes, walks through the duty-free shops and Robert running from window to window chasing his newfound love in life, aeroplanes! Every window offered a view of a plane Robert, nose pressed to the glass, shouted excitedly, plane, plane! The boarding call came, and off we went into the big Jumbo. Pretty Thai hostesses welcomed us on board, and welcomed everyone else too, until there was not a spare seat on the plane. So, with Robert now accustomed to jumping on our laps, Emily listening to stories on the walkman, and concerned stares from nearby passengers, we flew off into the blue sky.
Big brown Australia stayed under us for a long time. We thought we saw the MacDonnell Ranges a few times and expected to see Alice below. Then finally the coastline passed beneath us. We were really on our way!
Emily played with the corsage of orchids, Robert made plastic model aeroplanes, and Sue and I drank a toast to "future days".
Changi Airport in Singapore stopover was short. Emily and I played races on the moving footpaths, Robert; nose pressed to the window continued shrieking, plane, plane.
It was late in the evening when we touched down in Bangkok. As we approached the customs counter we were ushered into a small room with two other bewildered people. Customs officials asked for our passports, we anxiously awaited the outcome. Nappy search for heroin? No kids allowed? As it turned out the Thai customs tried to make entry into Bangkok easier for tourists with kids, by using a small air-conditioned office.
In the main hall, we were met by a smiling tour organizer who found a taxi for us, to take us to our hotel. On the way to the taxi counter, a worried girl in uniform took me by the arm and ushered us away into a waiting room. It seemed we were about to go off on the wrong tour.
The hotel was luxurious, with a large foyer with a fountain and cascade, and big stone fish in the pool. Emily and Robert just flopped into the big cushioned, couches. Our room for the next five days soon became crowded with cushions all over the floor and a huge cot

blocking the doorway. It stayed in that condition for most of our stay. Breakfast arrived on a trolley that folded into a banquet table. The heat of the day, the smell of the city and the water traffic on the river below greeted us on our first breakfast morning in Bangkok.
The Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel had it all. Swimming pool, choice of restaurants, and even a private garden next door, which we found the hard way, by sneaking through the grounds of the Portuguese Embassy.
That first morning, Emily in hand and Robert strapped in the pushchair, we headed off to see the city. Emily and Robert were the attraction of the sidewalk. Two blonde kids in a land of giggling, smiling Thai. Later, even the bickie boys sat Robert proudly on their motorbikes. The road we decided to walk along to get to Lumphini Park turned into slushy mud, road works. Out of a narrow side street came a Tuk Tuk. We hopped in, and off for a ride of our life in the motorised rickshaw. Robert is now into, Blurb, blurb, motorbike, screaming at all the bikes. Emily was happier holding onto the seat for dear life. Sue and I welcomed the cool breeze blowing through the open Tuk Tuk. I bargained harshly and got the price down from five to three. I gave the bewildered driver three hundred bat.

Royal Palace Bangkok

After a stroll around the lake in the park, past groups of picnicking Thai families, and boys hiring mats to sleep on, we found another Tuk Tuk to take us home. This time the fare was fifty bat! So my

bargaining had the right numbers, but wrong zeros. The sidewalks were full of stalls or street cafes, smells of car fumes and cooking mingled with the candles burning in the tiny decorative Buddhist shrines. Our first taste of Thai food was at a Western café, hamburger and chips

That afternoon we went on our first tour. The Royal Palace and temples glittered in the bright sunlight. The golden roofs on the temples, statues of warriors, monks and people praying at the temple shrines, all added to the spectacle. We were shown past walls with murals of Buddhist life, past sacred shrines, then barefooted into the Emerald Temple. On the way back we were offered free coke at a warehouse that had rows of Thai silk and carved wooden elephants. Back at the hotel, Sue now an expert in silk, wandered off into the shopping centre next door and ordered some silk clothes. The shopping centre was multi-story with escalators and huge fish tanks, full of large, brightly coloured fish. Robert loved riding the escalators and Emily eating ice cream while watching the fish.

The following day we bused to the outskirts of the city and went on a river journey, up river to see life on the fringes of the river. The boat was a long shallow, narrow speed boat. It was about sixty feet long and sped up the river, splashing us all the way. Robert loved it, but Emily and Sue did"t like it too much when the narrowboat leaned into waves of other passing boats. The stopover was on the side of the river, we were filled with local rum and rice cakes.

The evenings in Bangkok offered street life that we had never seen before. One evening, with Robert in the pushchair, we both walked through the narrow alleys off to one side of the hotel. The variety of side street restaurants and food shops kept Robert wide-awake and me too, amusing locals us being the only Europeans in site and with a little boy in a pushchair.

We spent a full day on a long bus tour, out through salt fields into a densely forested area, where we went inside a traditional Thai farmhouse. A little girl posed with a snake around her neck. This kept both Robert and Emily at a distance. The boat trip to the floating market started on a small part of the river. The group took small narrow speed boats through the narrow canals that eventually opened into a large warehouse area where on the water floated all sorts of small craft selling foods, baskets and farm produce. We were put ashore in one of the warehouses that sold a variety of jewellery, crafts and clothing. We bought a Chinese Tapestry of a hundred dancing men.

The bus trip continued to a snake show. Emily and Sue braved it for a minute. Meanwhile, Robert and I slept on the bus. Then off to a

Pagoda, the largest we saw. There was a local play with dancers at the temple. Robert and watched the tourists being peddled around the temple in rickshaws.

Floating Market town 30 klms out of Bangkok

The Rose Garden was a beautiful setting with large gardens and waterways. We played in the playground (the kid's first playground) and then off to see a Thai dancing show. The elephants performed log-shifting tricks and could pick up coins with their trunks.

Sue's evening was spent fitting her new silk clothes. Emily and Robert were by now, experts on Thai cartoons on the TV.

The next day was Sue's birthday! We never did find MacDonald's, but after miles of travel on Tuk Tuk's, it was nice to relax in the hotel pool. Sue did get a bouquet
of orchids.
That evening Sue and I had a special birthday dinner in the Captain Bush restaurant. One of the special times on out trip.
On our last day in Bangkok, we decided to be adventurous and walked off towards the Golden Buddha Temple, we even found it. So, off with our shoes and inside to have a look at a very large Buddha in a very small temple. We then took a Tuk Tuk across the river to the Temple of Dawn. A very ancient temple on the side of the river with very steep steps on the outside of the spires. We climbed up these but had to get help to get back down. Next to the temple was another temple that housed the past kings of Thailand. A student showed us through the grounds, it is a popular spot to have your family tombstones on display. The trip back to the hotel was by Waterbus.
The flight to London didn't leave until midnight. The last evening in Bangkok seemed to take a long time. The flight to Frankfurt / London was in the evening most of the way. When we arrived in Frankfurt it was cold, wet and rainy,
This is Europe!
A few hours later, we touched down in London.
Chapter two
We taxied along the tarmac to the terminal, looking out at the puddles and overcast sky. We were still dressed in our Bangkok summer gear and hoped that the walk to the terminal wouldn't take too long. Customs and immigration went quickly, and out the door we strolled, Robert riding the trolley and Sue and I looking into the crowd for familiar faces. We found our way to the central meeting place.
Shortly they came! Dave Marge, Mary Stu and Ben. It was a pleasant meeting, finally we had bridged the gap of talking about coming over and now being here. Robert and I went with Dave and Sue and Emily went with Mary. We drove through the neat country fields, past the thatched cottages. South Pacific playing on the cassette player, Dave and I caught up on the events of the past two years, finally arriving in Winslow.
Keach Close becomes a house instead of an address. Clean cars, past big houses and there parked in Dave's front yard, a Volvo. That afternoon Dave and I drove through the village of Whitchurch, which welcomes 30-mph drivers, to Nether Winchendon to see the cottage and a beer was had in the Bell. It was an oldie-world Pub, with a back bar for regulars.
Dave answered the phone call at the pub (easy to find him), and we were ordered home. The next few nights' sleep were staggered with

the V.G's awake all night, Robert practising his hammering, and me discovering old Winslow in the early hours of the morning with Robert asleep in the pushchair. Jet lag is real!
Graham arrived from Sri Lanka and off to the annual village Tractor Pull we went. Marge knew everybody as we walked to the Village Square. The tractor pull we were told was a success but we didn't see it.
Chinese for tea and stories with wine. Great to relive times together in Pt. Vila and take up the great pastime of the Pacific gossip! Did you know, that..?
Sunday we drove off to a bushy park. Over the Grand Canal, passed the pub at Three Locks into the park to walk along the tracks kicking a football clothed like the Michelin tyre man, really enjoying a day out in the English summer.
We fed the ducks. Robert and Ben nearly swam with them. We picnicked in sight of the ice cream van, drank tea and car chased Dave back to Winslow.
We said farewell to Graham and Mary packed all our things in the Volvo and headed off to our first cottage.

First Cottage Nether Winchendon, our Volvo

It was a two-storey-adjoining cottage, halfway down a narrow lane that led to the village church, post box and telephone.

Nether Winchendon was not a village of any size. It had an old Norman church and an Elizabethan manor house, a little river with swans and a footbridge. The cottages were large farmhouse types with walls that buckled and leaned.

Oxford Picnic with Jules Cook (centre)

Our cottage had a sunny kitchen and a cosy, thick-walled living room with a wood fireplace. The upstairs bedrooms were cold and the beds old and covered with thick old blankets. Sue and I pushed open the bathroom window. The view overlooked our small village out further across the valley to the neighbouring Cuddington village on a ridge. We had two weeks in this cottage, in the small village of Nether Winchendon.

That Wednesday we followed Dave through small villages up to the heights of the Chiltern Hills to overlook the plain, Dave drove on to work. We crossed over the plain to the other side to have an afternoon with the Nutts. Graham, Julia and the kids, James and Laura staying in their stately parent's house in a very smart village, Great Missenden. We played croquet on the lawn. Emily and Robert played with their old friends; After Vanuatu, the Nutts had been living in Swaziland near to another ex Vanuatu faintly, the Dickinsons both part of the Barclay Bank Team.

That afternoon I received a phone call to ring my sister Janet in Ulverstone, Tasmania. Dad had died a few days earlier. We stayed at the Garlick's that night, I spoke to Mum and felt too far away. I hid my grief by being busy.

The next few days we kept busy with trips. We went to Oxford to see Dave for lunch, took an open-top bus trip through the city of spires and spent the afternoon at ex-Pt. Vila Jules Cook, Robert and Emily playing with her son Neil, we even had tea and cake out in the warm sun.

Saturday was a big day! It was the season of fetes. Nether Winchendon had their church fete in the gardens of the old manor house. Games for the kids old clothes and books to browse through and lucky tickets that could win you a can of beans or bottle of pop. Tea and cakes were hurriedly served by all the good village ladies, Emily had a tractor ride and Robert tried to pinch the balls from the coconut shy.

The afternoon was even busier at the next fete. There were pony rides, squirting fire engines and a loud noisy ambulance. It was Stuart's school fete Marge won a prize that became a wedding gift!

That night was spent at Keach Close, then off to Woburn Abbey to meet the Tranters (Nick and Rachel who were old Pt Vila friends) at a church where we picnicked under the trees on the Abbey grounds.

We played a World Series cricket game and watched the herds of deer run across the grounds. As usual, it rained.

We said farewell to the Tranters under umbrellas and warmed up around our fire back in the cottage.

Monday was laundry day but with a difference. Off to the Cotswolds! First stop, Bourton on Water, and had lunch on the riverside. After we walked along the river to a miniature village. During the walk to the miniature village, we crossed over many narrow stone footbridges that were only a foot above the stream. At the miniature village, (which turned out to be a replica of the village we had just walked through), Robert and Emily were giants.

We then drove through small villages, past light-coloured stoned cottages. Signposts reading, Upper and Lower Slaughter, Guiting Power, these were some of the picturesque villages we found after driving down some of the narrowest lanes we had yet encountered. After, we look at the larger town of Stow on the Wold, with its cobbled town square surrounded by beautiful old stone warehouses and other old buildings of much charm and character. At Morten in Marsh, the Volvo had a birthday, (I found a carwash). Sue found a Launderette and the kids found a playground and played in the rain.

We stopped by chance, in Deddington to visit Tony and Maria Bennets (aviation engineer from Pt Vila) at the Ritchie's cottage. They were away on the continent, but the kids enjoyed the break being out of the car, and all the toys of the Ritchie's daughter Farnham.

Bourton on Water Replica Village with giants!

Playgrounds became a popular pastime (and trying to find them)

We walked around the gardens of Waddesdon Manor past the bird Avery with speaking birds; to an adventure playground. Waddesdon Manor was a fairy tale castle with pointy round towers, large fountains and heaps of statues of large naked ladies with big bottoms.

We spent a day driving to Newbury, and stopped next to the Thames at Goring to watch the boats pass through the locks while enjoying sandwiches on the river bank. We arrived at the Lee's to see my godchildren Kate and Hannah. Bob and Debbie Lee were fine and looking forward to living back on the Isle of Wight again. (Bob was my sailing partner on the 420; their twin girls are about Emily's age.)

The drive back to Nether Winchendon was pretty as dusk settled in. We drove through tree-lined roads, and at times, along the Thames River with its pretty river banks now with all sorts of houseboats tied up for the evening.

We had a barbeque in England! It rained! Yet we were not deterred. Dave put a roof over it and the sausages sizzled on. The beer was nice and we reminisced of the days of barbeques that had gone before.

Blenheim Palace was certainly well situated with its large lake and many tourist buses. We strolled around the gardens under umbrellas dodging puddles. After a train trip to the other end of the estate (we were the only passengers) we found a tropical paradise. The Butterfly House. Off with all the rain gear, we wandered through the hibiscus and tropical flowers, chasing the butterflies.

That evening we dined out in a special pub called the Old Thatched

Inn at Olney. (18Th century Rev. John Newton parish) Dave and I enjoyed the variety of real ales. The traditional English meal with the company of our dear wives made it a pleasant night to finish our first cottage stay.
We packed everything into the Volvo the following morning and started on our trip north.
This was the first of a regular Saturday rush to another cottage in another part of Great Britain.

Chapter Three

The trip north was our first long journey in the Volvo. We left Nether Winchendon early, on a bright sunny day. Summer had arrived. We drove past the Banbury Cross and saw fine ladies with rings on their fingers and not too many bells on their toes, out shopping. Then over the hills to Stratford upon Avon, where we drove past rows of house barges on the canal and through the Tudor-style local shopping centre. A few miles north we found a Happy Eater (a great name for a family restaurant) who shared some food with us. Then over the rise, into the valley of Royal Doulton, Mary Teskey's home ground. After years of collecting. We had found the home of our collected dinner service at last. Being Saturday, market day, Sue bought me a pair of slippers, my father's day present, at the Stoke on Trent market.
With Robert firmly held on my shoulders, we attempted to find the rest of our dinner service in the various china shops. We were given directions to the Wedgwood village. It is situated along a valley and stretches up the side of the hill. It was a busy day in the village! The college in the village was having a fete, there was a wedding at the church, and we arrived in time to have a tour through the Wedgewood factory.
The showroom and china painting were on display. We took a photo of a lady painting cups and were told not to take any more pictures of Wedgwood's secrets.
Off we drove through the Peaks district. Up to the highest windy village in England called Flash, across to Buxton, in its sheltered valley. Then over the baron hills, down along the deep blue reservoirs until we came again to the top of a high hill. There below us, the Holm Valley. Old woollen mills, rows of stone fences, and the Holm River winding its way through the town of Holmfirth.
Our cottage was in the centre of the village, halfway up a steep hill behind the church. It would have been much easier to walk up the old stone steps to it. However, we jostled the car around bends until we came alongside the row of cottages of which ours was the middle one.
We got the key from the lady living next door and entered the cottage. It was what is called one up one down. I must say, l was a bit disappointed but I guess it had character, probably an old miller's

cottage. The kitchen was in the cupboard under the stairs yet surprisingly it was efficient. There were very steep stairs up to the toilet come shower, the kid's bedroom and our bedroom. I did a bit of unpacking and then we went into town and got greasy fish ‘n’ chips from “Combos “ restaurant. Ate our tea, showered, and dropped off to a hard-earned sleep.

Breakfast at Holmfirth cottage

The next day was Sunday and British Father's Day. John was very happy with his slippers and I bought John a book about day trips in the countryside and through little villages. We had a special breakfast, and then off for a walk through the little village. We found a playground. Emily and Robert enjoyed playing in it and seeing they had been in the car most of the day before they enjoyed the playground even more. We walked back to our little cottage, puffing after walking up all the worn old stone steps. We went to see Graham and Mary at their home in Cleckheaton. It took us a little while to find it, but we made it in the end. Graham and Mary's house was quaint. It is a terraced house, being the middle house in a circular building; it was like a wedge of cake, fat in the front and thin at the back. It was great to see Graham and Mary again and this time on their territory. Pat, Mary's sister arrived. Then off to the local pub, The Wheatsheaf, a two-minute walk away. It was a fine day so we were able to sit outside so Emily and Robert were able to play on the swings and slides. After a few Tetley's (the local beer) we went back to the Teskey's to eat a lovely roast dinner. After lunch, we went for a drive to an old manor

house called Oakwell House. We walked around the garden past lots of flower beds, then quickly through a nearby field dodging the local farmer's tractor as he tried to bale his hay, of course to a playground. It was playtime for Emily and Robert and the two other children Graham and John. For us, back to the Teskey's for a cuppa and a chat. We left about 5. The kids were getting a bit cranky, so to quieten them we drove back to Holmfirth, the long way.

Monday, it was raining, not too cold, but miserable English grey. John took Emily and Robert for a walk wearing their new raincoats and gumboots. I did the washing at the launderette down the road, and a bit of shopping. I still have to do these mundane jobs on holidays! The weather cleared in the afternoon so we went for a walk around one of the reservoirs. Really lovely walk, Emily and Robert enjoyed themselves, especially Robert who jumped in all the puddles he could find.

We nipped out for a couple of drinks that night, ran to the pub, had a drink at one pub and off to a different pub for another drink, then sneaked back home. Like a mini pub crawl. Nice to get out for a bit. John had been feeling a bit down, so this helped.

Tetley's isn't just a brand of tea!

Off to York for the day. We arrived and it started to rain, but who cares? A beautiful town, all cobbled stoned roads and Tudor-style shops everywhere. We had a walk through the York Minster, very impressive. Then a walk along the "Shambles" (a very narrow street, with buildings leaning towards each other), then through the market. We went to a centre called ' Jorvic'. Here, you walk down many flights of stairs and can take a ride on a computer-controlled carriage through a copy of a Viking village. This was complete with a running commentary and all the smells to go with it, which weren't too pleasant at times. We then came out into a museum to see many archaeological findings, which had been, dug up in this plot of land in York a few years prior. We left York in the rain and drove to the first Happy Eater we came across and had afternoon tea. Eventually got back to Holmfirth after circling Huddersfield. (A nice piece of countryside to get lost in, anyway.)

Off on a sightseeing day. We drove to Huddersfield and Hebden Bridge, a pretty little village. Up to the Bronte Moors, bitterly cold and baron. We took a ride on a steam train from the town of Haworth to Keighley. Haworth was the town where the Bronte family lived. We went for a walk up the village's steep hill to the cobbled stoned High Street.

We drove on along the hilly countryside and little villages to the Cow and Calf rocks. The children were asleep so John went for a walk up in the rocks and when the children woke we walked up to meet him.

We drove on through lots of residential towns and arrived in Bradford. Here we walked through the city centre to see the IMAX theatre, one of the largest screens in the world but we were too late. We settled for a cuppa instead and back to the Teskey's. Off to the Wheatsheaf again for a drink. Mary went to the ballet with Pat, in Bradford. Graham, John and I had a beaut serving of fish 'n chips after Emily and Robert went to bed. Next morning we went back to Holmfirth, market day. John bought an umbrella, as it was pouring down, and he also bought kippers from the fishmonger and stunk the cottage out at lunchtime. John met the Teskey's down by Sid's Café (Last of the Summer Wine TV series café) by the church below our cottage. Graham and Mary had a bit of a problem with their car. We all went for a ride in our car, to see the famous penis stone, it was still raining. After Emily and Robert were asleep, that night we had Chinese takeaways and played cards, lots of laughs. Like the old days in Pt. Vila. Graham and Mary stayed the night in what turned out to be our worst cottage, but no worries; we were amongst good friends. The Teskey's left early the next morning. I did more washing and drying. After a bit of shopping, I packed and John stacked everything in the car. We had a bit of a drive around Holmfirth and outlying areas and then drove to an old Tudor Manor house called Shibden Hall not far from Halifax. We had a walk through the Manor House and had a look through the barn, which had old carriages in it also old wooden brewing equipment, looked at the blacksmiths and carpenters', shop and lastly to the little old pub.

The Connells, old friends from Vila, arrived at the Teskey's. Graham played soccer and arrived back an hour or so later. Mary made a great meal and a lovely evening was had by all. We all stayed the night at Teskey's. Waved the Connell's off in the morning. John and I packed up the car, said our goodbyes and the Van Garderen's were off on another part of their journey. This Saturday we had very foggy and drizzly weather, rather miserable!

Chapter four

The next cottage was in the northern part of the Lakes district. The rain continued as we drove over the hills out of West Yorkshire, we soon arrived in the town of Skipton. The town was busy with markets and an arts festival. The office where I booked all the cottages is in this village. I visited the people in the office and was assured that all our bookings were o.k. Sue and the kids, gum boots fitted on, attacked the supermarket, in this busy little town.

A thick cloud settled over the countryside for most of the drive to the Lake District. A few miles before we arrived in Keswick, the weather brightened up and the drive over the hill into Keswick gave us our first view of the lake and surrounding hills.

Keswick too, had a market on the high street. We wandered through the old streets, past pubs advertising beer and all sorts of lunches, and outdoor mountaineering shops, and found ourselves in a restaurant that sold health foods and a pint of beer.
Keswick had it all!

Puddles for Robert new gumboots

After lunch, we drove along the Derwent water lakeside up over the hills to our cottage at Lower Fellside, close by Caldbeck. The roads had become very narrow and fences had disappeared, mountain sheep grouped in small flocks were scattered all over the Fell.

The sheep were long-haired and mainly a brown colour unlike all the short-haired white sheep you would see in N Z. Our cottage was the middle section of the building between the farmer's house and the barn. The owner welcomed us with sheep dogs and shepherd crook. The cottage was large with bedrooms upstairs and a large warm living room next to the kitchen.

The view from our cottage looked up the side of the Fell to the foothills of Mount Skiddaw, to the south, and miles across the valley to Caldbeck to the north.

It was certainly a cottage in the country.

Back to watching television, catching up on the soaps, like Neighbours, and the Street. We did enjoy a few good mini-series.

Caldbeck was a lovely little village with a stream running through it, with an old stone bridge, a little duck pond and an old church. There was a craft show on that morning at the priest's mill beside the church and the little stream. We had a look around the displays of lovely knitted jumpers with home-dyed and spun wool, wooden clogs and wrought iron work. We drove back to the cottage up on the hill and had a relaxing afternoon at home.

We experienced the first Sunday afternoon since leaving Vila having nothing planned. Monday is washing day and housework and John took Emily and Robert for a walk in the paddock and then went down to Caldbeck in the car for an ice cream and to feed the ducks. We took Emily and Robert to the playground in a small village close by in the afternoon and went for a bit of a sightseeing drive. We drove to Cockermouth, parked by the riverside, walked across the footbridge that crossed the Cocker River, into the town and had a look through the doll and model train museum, really enjoyed all the model trains, especially John. The kids had a play in the playground over the river by the car park.

The next day was fine and so we decided to be real tourists and have a look at the Lakes. We drove to a huge rock called Bowder Stone, and walked along a track for about 10 minutes. We all climbed onto the Bowder Stone huge rock, great view of the countryside, so green. We were going to go over Honister's pass to get to Buttermere, but realised we didn't have enough petrol. I expected a petrol station at the start of the pass but soon it became evident that no petrol tanker

could get to the village we were going to pass through. So back to Keswick back along the Derwent River that was spanned by long narrow stone arched bridges. This time tank filled to the brim, and we drove the regular route to Lake Buttermere. The day was windy and a little overcast. The walk from the car park to the lake was about 20 minutes. The track was full of puddles much to Roberts's delight. His poor little gumboots just couldn't take in any more water. Buttermere is a small lake with steep mountains on each side. A small river fills the lake, and at the mouth of the river, is the start of many walks, all the walks eventually finish back at the Buttermere Pub!

From Buttermere we decided to take the smallest roads possible to Cockermouth, It was surprising how the Volvo can squeeze itself to get through tight laneways.

The playground at Cockermouth was again a welcome stop. Also the fish and chips!

We continued our search for the narrowest road and found a way back to our cottage through a small village, Winthrop. There was a working sawmill driven by a water wheel. Belts and a system of drive shafts powered all types of woodworking machines.

The next day we decided to solve a mystery. Just near Caldbeck was a road leading over the hills to the north, signposted Aspatria. The name conjured visions of an old Roman fort. it didn't quite live up to our expectations.

The back of the car was again full of washing, so the hunt for a launderette became the next adventure. Keswick won again.

I took the kids for a walk to the tourist bureau while Sue washed. There was a large-scale model of the surrounding countryside and a picture of a pretty little bridge crossing a mountain stream with the Derwent Water in the background.

Sunny day Lakes District Ullswater near Aria Force Falls

We found this scene later that afternoon, Ashbridge, it certainly was a pretty place! We walked along a ridge nearby that offered a view south into the mountains. The chocolate box scenery, that friends described as the Lake District lived up to expectations.

We drove along narrow farm roads behind Skiddaw, most of them unfenced, over countless stone bridges until we came down to Ullswater. From the car park, it was a good climb to the top of Airia Force. The waterfall was full and the small stone bridges that cross at the top just below the waterfall added extra beauty to the spot. The walk back took a slight deviation that led us to the top of a hill that overlooked the Ullswater. It was a still, sunny day; the only ripples on the lake were those made by the steamer as it slowly moved along the lake.

The main township of Ullswater and Glenridding, although very busy, still retained the character of the district. With old stone hotels, gardens and waterfront dwellings that didn't crowd the shoreline.

The drive over the mountain through the small village of Troutbeck, into Windermere, we passed miles and miles of high stone fences. A credit to the hard-working men who carried stones up those steep hills to build them, but left us puzzled as to why so much effort was put into having them there!

Windermere was busy. Rows of guesthouses and coaches. We drove past some of the notable lakeside houses and hotels, found our way to the car ferry and across the lake to the home of Peter Rabbit. Sue took

Emily through Beatrix Potter's little cottage, while I kept an eye on the nearby fields in case Peter should pop up.
The sky was clear blue, and we headed up Wrynose Pass and Hardknott Pass to get across to the coast. The passes were extremely narrow and kept you constantly hoping that no one else was using the road from the opposite direction.
On the summit of the Hardknott pass, we found a flat spot to park the car. Ahead was a view, through a valley across to the seashore. Faintly on the horizon, we could see the Isle of Man. A few hundred feet below us were the remains of a Roman fort, where all those years ago they too enjoyed this view. We wound our way down to the coast to Whitehaven.

Cosy on the Bowder Stone near Keswick

Sandwiches finished long ago, we were in search of a cash point machine. This had become our only way of getting some cash, our chequebook had not been finalized before leaving Winslow and being careful not to overspend, we only took small amounts from the cash point machines. Unfortunately, the lack of banks on our journeys in the lakes district left us a bit shorter than usual. We wandered through the market at Whitehaven and bought a kite. I wanted to buy some kippers again, but Sue would not forget the stench left behind in Holmfirth.
Back at the cottage, we drove the sheep dogs mad. The kite flew well and the picture of a descending hawk painted on it looked realistic.
Friday morning the ducks at the Caldbeck pond had a birthday. Robert

and Emily led them to the pond side bench stood on it and fed them heaps of old bread. I was kept busy chasing away a particularly nasty old drake that tried to hog all the food.
We walked through the little village and took some photos of the kids on the old stone bridge that spanned the river.
The drive north over the hill to Carlisle offered us our first view of Scotland. Carlisle is a large city; yet seemed to retain a lot of its past. A lot of the old city walls were intact and the impressive castle still dominated the skyline. We parked the car at the foot of the castle wall. The air was sweet with the smell of freshly baked biscuits.
Robert comfortable in his pushchair, Emily in hand we headed off to visit our first castle. The castle had seen many renovations in its time. Although the castle keep was still much as it has always been. We walked up the steep round staircases peering out the long narrow windows and finally made it to the roof, to stand on the battlements and look over the city. Inside the castle were models of how Carlisle once was. Also the history of its many sieges and stormings.
We walked to the centre. It was very busy and modern. At the end of one of the arcades, we came across a very smart Tea Shoppe full of all different cakes and scones. A welcome stop!
On the way back to the castle we went through an old indoor market with brightly painted stall fronts, fishmongers, butchers, grocers, cheese, and even fish and chips.
Next to the castle was a large modern playground that could not be resisted by Emily and Robert.

Picnic day at Fellside village park

We stopped at an old picnic roadside stop halfway uphill overlooking the Carlisle plain. In the long grass, we found an old bench seat, and sat down to have another meal of fish and chips, while our kite flew high above us.

Our week in the Lake District, on the farm at Fellside had come to an end. The Friday night packing of suitcases started all over again.

Chapter five

Our next cottage was across the other side in Northumberland in Fenwick Steads.

We left Lower Fellside early Saturday stopped in Caldbeck for a quick last look around, then north over the hills past Carlisle, Gretna Green, into the Teviotdales. Border country, Scotland.

We crossed the border through Hawick then onto Kelso where we stopped for a cuppa. We were given a change in Scottish notes.

Kelso's main street was cobbled, along the old abbey, and the river Tweed. We bought jumpers for Sue and Robert, then through Coldstream back into England to Berwick on Tweed.

We crossed the Tweed north again into Berwick, an old town on the side of the hill and found our way to the beach.

It was hard to remember if we were in Scotland or England, there certainly was a different accent! From the top of the beach, we could see down the coast, two large castles, Holy Island and Bamburough.

Our cottage at Fenwick Steads was just down the lane from a large manor house. It was the middle part of a row of terraced cottages built for the farm workers. The Neighbours were pensioners who had lived in their cottage since childhood.

Northumberland cottage overlooking Lindisfarne Island

The view over the fields looked straight onto Lindisfarne Island.
This was our first cottage by the seaside.
The next day, with bathers and towels on board, we headed down the coast to a small fishing port, Seahouses. On the way we passed the huge castle at Bamburgh, along the coast we looked down huge dunes onto stretches of golden beaches.
Seahouses was a small village in a protected cove, with a small harbour and rows of small, local fishing boats. We walked along the harbour wall, fish nets and smells.
The sun was hot and the North Sea was calm. The horizon was filled with lots of low, rocky islands, the Farne Islands. Later we discovered that these were popular bird sanctuaries, which attracted hundreds of visitors.
The nearby beaches were full of sun bakers and at the entrance to each beach, an ice-cream van.
We drove back towards our cottage, found a quieter beach near Bamburgh, stumbled down the dunes and put our feet into the freezing waters of the North Sea.
Monday was shopping day at Berwick upon Tweed. In the old Tollhouse, the lifeguard association was having a morning tea . So Robert Emily and I stuffed ourselves with homemade cakes while Sue shopped.
Back across the Tweed, we stopped on the esplanade of the old beach resort town of Spittal. All the chairs were of the 1930s and the only

change seemed to be the paint. The Beach was stony. Emily braved the cold water and swam.

On the beach at Bamburgh Castle

That afternoon we attacked Bamburgh Castle. It was a huge castle. The rooms were full of antiques within easy reach for Robert. Robert saw the castle interior from my shoulders. He was very polite to everybody, constantly shouting, hello, and hello to everybody he saw. From the battlements of the castle, we could see Holy Island to the north, Lindisfarne castle, and miles of dunes. The Village of Bamburgh was very quaint with small low houses, a small grass common complete with a water well. We bought some buckets and spades and on the beach below the walls of the castle, we built our castles. Back at the cottage, we saw the three old men from the next-door cottages, sitting on a bench, overlooking their garden plots, in deep discussion. They kept up this regular afternoon event all the time we were there, and who knows how long before we arrived?

I took the kids into a nearby field to feed a pony and fly the kite Sue cooked a tasty meal, and made a nice change to the more than-regular fish and chips.

We crossed the causeway to Holy Island early the next day. It was a tidal crossing that was flooded over for five hours between tides.

Holy Island is a long mostly flat island that rises to a small hill in the south. In the small town of Lindisfarne are the ruins of a very early Priory. In the 6th, century Monks travelled across from Iona off the Scottish coast to find refuge on this Island. The greatest legacy they

left behind was the Lindisfarne gospels, and a very tasty beverage called mead.
The Island today has a small fishing community and caters for tourists in the summer months.

Sharing a beer with Robert on Lidisfarne Island waiting for low tide.

We walked along the beach near the castle past the small fishing sheds made out of upturned old fishing boat hulls that were cut in half, across the centre of the hull and blocked up, with a door to get in.
These were placed haphazardly along the shoreline. Then walked over to the Priory ruins mingling with a party of school kids.
At the highest point of the island, just above the Priory, was a lighthouse. We had our lunch, overlooking the bay across to our cottage, also out to the fishing boats further out to sea, and a small island that served as a retreat for St. Cuthbert. On a point jutting out from the mainland were two granite needles about half a mile apart. We found out later that these were early navigational aids for the fishermen to find their way back through the channel.
The island's pub's opening times were subject to the tides, so an afternoon beer was available. (Pubs in England closed between 3 and 5 each afternoon.) Robert and I had our first beer in a pub together, in Lindisfarne.
We visited the Mead Shoppe and sampled the golden-coloured drink. Sweet and easy to drink.
Robert crawled into one of the display cabinets and started to help himself to the bottles of drink. Luckily, most of the bottles kept their

balance. .
The next day we were back in Berwick upon Tweed. We visited the Mead factory and sampled some more mead. In the complex was the pottery shop where many different types of earthenware containers were made to export the mead in. We bought my birthday present, goblets and a carafe with Lindisfarne printed on it. Also, a bottle of mead to fill it up!
Sue and Emily went shopping for a birthday present and cards while Robert and I walked through the military museum that focused mainly on soldiers' lives in the early wars. When we returned to the car I discovered a cake in the boot. So I was going to have a birthday cake after all. That afternoon we drove to the hills inland from our cottage to find St. Cuthbert's Cave.
We had to walk a distance from the car park, up a hill and through a small forest. The cave was a deep gap under a large stone ridge. It overlooked the interior of the border hills. The cave must have been a popular spot in the late 19th century. The graffiti, neatly carved, all seemed to date from this period.
Just as we left the cave Robert dived to the ground. A fighter jet roared by only just meters above us. St. Cuthbert would not have been impressed! The walk back to the car seemed to take ages, with Emily's poor little legs trying their hardest. I don't think that visitors disturb the spirit of St Cuthbert too often, these days.
I woke up to a hearty birthday breakfast, cards and a fine pair of pyjama pants from the kids. A travelling shop arrived outside our door, where Sue bought some cakes. We walked down through the fields to the coastal railway line. While waiting in the field for a train to pass by, we played ring a ring a Rosie. Back at the cottage, we had a feast of cakes, after which we sat outside and played, passing the parcel and running races, much to the amusement of the neighbours.
That afternoon we visited the next largest township in the area, Alnwick. This had been an old market town. The entrance was through a spectacular archway that led onto a cobblestone High street. Sue finally found some shoes that fit Robert and Emily. They enjoyed duck and train rides outside a Woolworth's supermarket, which they found very hard to leave. We drove onto the coast to a little fishing village called Craster. This was the closest we could drive to Dunstanburgh Castle. The castle was situated about a mile out on a headland. We walked to the castle through grassy fields. The entrance to the castle was still intact, but most of the castle lay in ruin. Although in ruin, it still has the appearance of a mighty castle. From the northernmost battlements, we could see Baniburgh Castle and Lindisfarne Castle in the distance.
We drove back to the cottage via the narrow coast road that passes

through many small villages.
That evening we hired a babysitter, and Sue and I spent the evening at the Black Bull pub in the nearby village of Lowick. It was a very traditional English meal. I'm now 32!
The weather changed to dismal rain. Up until then, during this week, we had had beautiful sunshine. We decided to head north into the border area to discover the ancestry of Sue's great-grandfather.
Our first stop was the border town of Innerleithen, this was the last place that Sue's great-grandfather Phaup had lived before immigrating to NZ.
Innerleithen was an old woollen mill town, in a fertile valley, with a fast-running trout river.
We had hoped to contact a resident called Phaup, but he wasn't home. So we decided to look for tombstones that might have the family name. The family V.G. dressed in raincoats and gum boats roamed through the rain from tombstone to tombstone. Robert armed with a bucket and spade was determined to meet his ancestors. We had no luck.
At the next large town, Peebles, we asked the tourist bureau where we could get information on family history. They suggested we call the district library in Selkirk. With the afternoon getting on we raced down to Selkirk to find the help of a very efficient librarian. She informed Sue of great-grandfather Phaup's parentage. His mother had married into the Walker family (LWR of Christchurch NZ fame) The cemetery did have a lot of Walkers.
It was very pleasing that we could, on a wet Friday drive to an area we had not been to before and come back with so much past family history.
We also now had an address in Edinburgh to obtain more family records.
The next day we left our cottage in Northumberland and headed north to Inverness.

Chapter six

We left Fenwick Steads early in the morning, driving the same route we had taken the day before to Innerleithen. This time to continue much further on. We stopped outside Innerleithen and took a photo for Dad Agnew. Then through Peebles again and across to Glasgow. The Road through Glasgow took us past old high-rise state housing flats, where the ground-floor apartments were either boarded or bricked up. The centre of Glasgow was a mixture of the old being torn down and replaced with unimpressive new buildings.
We drove out of Glasgow over the hills to Loch Lomond. A truly beautiful lake surrounded by high mountains and full of small islands. We stopped at a small village on the shoreline called Luss. From there

we took a cruise boat, packed with a party of Italian students, which motored past many of the small islands.
We had lunch on the small beach and watched the boats sail across the loch. We followed the shore of Loch Lomond for some time; it narrowed into a long gorge. Then up the hills into the Grampians. At Crianlarich, a railway town in the mountains, we started our climb. When we reached the top of the plateau we saw patches of snow on the higher peaks.

Emily on the beach at Lock Lomond

It was a cold but clear day and the views were magnificent. We followed what first seemed a mountain stream down to Glencoe, past mountain lodges, through a deep gorge down to the shoreline of Loch Linnlie.
We drove around the streets of Fort William and just to the north we stopped to look at Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain.
We followed the Caledonian Canal, Loch Lochy, to Fort Augustus. At Fort Augustus, we stopped for tea. And I had a good Scottish beer in the Pub. Outside the pub was an arrangement of Locks that were part of the canal system. We had a serving of fish and chips, watching the sailboats pass through the locks.
During the long drive along the banks of Loch Ness, we saw many shops and museums with Nessie the monster, but she didn't show herself to us that evening. We did stop at the ruins of Urquhart Castle where Nessie is most often seen.

Once in Inverness, it wasn't too difficult to find our cottage. It was just off one of the main roads into the city centre, close to the Castle and a few hundred yards from the riverbank.
The cottage appeared as if the owner had just left for a few hours of shopping. It was complete in every way. Later we found out that when it wasn't let out, the owner lived in it.
Inverness was bitterly cold. Rugged up in winter woollies, we walked along the River Ness until we came to a group of islands in the centre of the river that were accessed by suspension footbridges.
It was quite pretty walking along these island paths with the fast-running river alongside. Eventually, we found ourselves on the other side of the river. At a nearby park, a BMX rally was about to start. We walked back to our cottage along the opposite bank of the river. Inverness certainly suited the day stroller.
Sunday afternoon we walked through the shopping centre and were surprised at the amount of shops that were open for a Sunday afternoon. It seemed only the banks were closed.
On the way home Sue and the Kids took the high road and I took the low road back to the cottage. It took ages for Sue to appear. I went out looking for them and couldn't find them. This was the first time that we were unwillingly separated. Eventually, they turned up at the cottage after seeing a bit more of the city than they expected to see.
Monday afternoon we drove to the end of our street to the Pringle Mill and shop. The mill was very interesting with tartans being woven on large looms, with multicoloured strands of wool turning into a variety of tartan materials. The shop was enormous with every variety of tartan and the best woollenwear. They also had a computerized ancestry-tracing bureau. To help you decide which family tartan you should buy. We had a nicely presented form printed on the ancestry of the Agnew clan.
Dad Agnew was pretty close to the mark in all that he had told us about his Clan name.
That evening we ate at Wimpy's. Kids with wimpy hats and us deep into hamburgers.
Tuesday we were up and away early. Past the battleground of Culloden to the coastal town of Nairn. Off with the socks and shoes and a quick sprint down the dunes to the beach. It was a long sandy beach, sadly lacking anybody in swimwear.
Front Nairn, we headed inland over Heather Hills to Grantown on Sprey. This was a large rural type town, full of old hotels and much of a has-been atmosphere. We found a hotel for lunch and had the best meal in weeks. Although we were the only ones dining, It surely was a feast.
We followed a river valley to the rail town of Boat of Garten. A pretty

little place that now has a steam railway that offers a first-class restaurant on its trip along the Sprey Valley. We waited to see the train to arrive at the station, before continuing on our way to Carrbridge. Here stands a high arched narrow bridge, made out of river stones. It's not used now but a well-photographed spot.
We finished the day with another bite to eat at Wimpy's.
Wednesday was train trip day. We boarded our train to The Isle of Skye at 9:30 and slowly climbed out of Inverness up the mountains to the west. The towns were fewer and the scenery, although a rainy day, was spectacular. The Scottish Highlands certainly had a rugged look to them.
The coastline that we followed into the town Kyle of Lochalsh offered views of great mountains dropping straight to the sea.
We were all quickly directed to the car ferry that took us the mile across the water to the Isle of Skye. It rained and poured as the bus wound its way along the coast and over the mountain pass to the port of Portree. We had 45 mins to see the port. It was a quiet, sleepy fishing harbour with different coloured houses lining the quayside.
The view from the quayside reminded us very much of the view from the pier side at Akaroa, south of Christchurch in NZ.
The bus and train trip back, although lengthy, was enjoyable with coffee and beer on board the train and a table between seats. Robert competed with a passenger's dog, snatching the spilt biscuits that had fallen under the table.
It was a long trip, but although lousy weather we were very pleased to have travelled to Skye and hope to return and spend some days seeing it again.

Sue and Emily on the wharf Portree Isle of Skye

I phoned Dave Garlick on Monday evening to give him our address to forward our mail. This arrived on Thursday morning.

Letters from all members of my family, and a touching letter from Mum. I spent most of the day at home; Sue took Emily to the pictures to see Pinocchio. It was Emily's first time to see a film on the big screen. Emily cried when the film ended. She had hoped that the picture show would go on and on.

Clothed in our thickest winter woollies we headed off to the sports ground to see a Scottish show that had been running continuously for 30 or more years. It was very entertaining with granddads playing the pipes, grandchildren highland dancing and mums and dads displaying their vocal talents. At half time we all stood up (When asked where we were from, I mentioned we were from New Hebrides) as the rest of the audience applauded us for being visitors from the outer Hebrides.

It bucketed down on Friday. The hunt for a launderette was on again. We found one eventually on the other side of town. Inverness had its shady side too.

The RAF was giving a display that day on the showground. So Robert and Emily got a chance to sit on tanks, sit in front of bits of jets bolted to trailers, and ask the school cadets what it was all about.

Unfortunately, Robert and Emily found their way into a life-preserving raft all nicely set up to demonstrate how much gear it could hold. Two kids as well, overfilled it, and they were shooed away.

Saturday again, the car packed with our entire luggage and off on a

quick sprint to the museum to buy a small tapestry of a Scottish Highland scene. Then we headed across the river to see the Inverness Highland games before heading off to Aberdeen.
We waited at the entrance gate. The wind was howling, rain turning to sleet, and the gateman assured us that the games would go on if there was a slight improvement in the weather.
It was a shame, after all, summer was here. We waited for about an hour and a half; no extra cars arrived, so we decided to say farewell to Inverness.
The drive to Aberdeen took most of the day. We did pass Fochabers where my sailing crew the Beattie had lived before coming to Pt Vila.
Aberdeen is a grand city with its light grey, freshly coloured granite buildings. Huge wharf and it's the playground for the oil rig crews.
We found a friendly B&B and settled in for the night. The owners even offered to babysit for us if we wanted to go out. Nice, but we were too tired!
The husband had worked on oil rigs in many parts of the world and was about to go to South America to crew on a rig there. This was the first time we had all slept in the same room for many weeks. Robert woke very early and wanted the whole B&B to be awake with him. So, dressed in his little red jacket and gumboots, we headed off to the fishing wharf. Sunday morning is not a lively time to be there. It was very foggy;

Early Morning Aberdeen fishing port

we walked along the wharf looking at the different fishing boats. Some were old and rusty, others, giant monsters. Robert didn't say

much; hands in pockets, this little man walked the eerie fog-bound docks of Aberdeen.
B&B does have filling breakfasts and no washing up.
A few miles south of Aberdeen is a large estate that has been landscaped to a fairytale world. As we walked along the path we passed by and went through little townships and houses or statues of nursery rhymes. Old Macdonald's farm was complete with chooks and goats. The seven dwarfs' house with seven little beds. There was a stream running through the estate that had rickety bridges leading off to other fairytale places.
That afternoon we watched trains come and go, at the railway station much to Roberts's delight. The Harbour entrance was very rough, with stormy winds lashing the coast, we didn't see any ships or boats enter or leave. The North Sea wasn't always as calm as we had found it on the Northumberland coast.
We decided to take the family to an Italian restaurant. Disaster! Spoons are thrown everywhere, no baby seats to strap Robert in. Emily didn't want any of the food. Robert didn't want to dine with us, he preferred to try out all the other tables in the restaurant.
I kept looking out the window across the road to Wimpy's where it's all bolted down.
Back home to watch TV and calm down.
The next day the weather cleared. We headed down the road to Edinburgh. I stopped at the NCR factory at Dundee to find out about training courses. The training facility had moved to London many years before, but things changed.
As we crossed the long, high Tay Bridge, the car started to wobble. A flat tyre! We managed to get across the bridge and pull over. This was the time I discovered that the wheel brace and jack were not complete. At least, I did have a full spare. I flagged down an approaching Volvo and he helped me change the wheel.
The comradeship between Volvo owners seemed to reflect the class of drivers.
St. Andrews was the next stop. We drove past the golf courses into town and parked the car at the fisherman's quay.

Castle Ruins

Nearby were the ruins of St Andrews's abbey and perched on the cliff a castle fort. We walked past these and through the university grounds past halls dating back many centuries. St Andrews, home of the patron saint and many studious people, certainly,
was more than a golfer's Mecca.

We had lunch down at the fisherman's quay. The very small fishing boats were busy unloading their catch of crabs and reloading the cages that they caught the crabs with. It must have been a good day for crabbing.

To cross on the old, huge, Forth Bridge into Edinburgh is a most spectacular entrance. Still, people have entering the city this way for some time now. It's becoming quite an old bridge. A good example of early engineering.

We found a B&B in the southern area of Edinburgh not by choice but because the one-way streets led us there. Just off the main road south were lots of quieter streets full of Victorian terraced houses, nearly everyone being a guesthouse.

I booked the car in for a service the next day and found an off-licence and a takeaway Chinese fish and chip shop.

Back to TV and a crowded room. (Those instant cups of soups just don't resemble the advertised picture on the front of the cup.) The beer was nice though!

We bused into the city the next day. The first stop was the children's museum. This was full of old toys locked away from kids in glass

cases. They did have a kite-making class. Emily left with a kite ready to fly.
We made our way to the Registrar of births, deaths and marriages where Sue managed to find out more about the Phaup family. Wimpy's next door proved ideal for lunch. Kids were getting used to sitting on plastic seats and wearing funny paper hats by now. Walking through the city and up the mill to Edinburgh Castle stretched my muscles. The day was turning out to be hot, and the streets were crowded with all types of buskers, punk pipers and all.
The Castle entrance was being prepared for the Tattoo in a few weeks. We filed a single line past the crown jewels and all took turns sitting on the canons. The view across the city gardens and across to the hills did show off the beauty of the city. Emily tried to fly her kite, but it didn't want to be up with the birds, so Emily carried it around like a shield.

Emily with her kite at Endinburgh Castle

It was a quick descent from the castle down to the park. The flowers were in full bloom and the park was littered with sunbakers.
Kids slept well that night so did we.
Car packed again the next morning; we drove to the footpath leading to the top of
Arthur's Seat. This was the hill we saw from Edinburgh Castle. It didn't take too long to get to the top. It was still early and sitting on top of this high rocky outcrop, overlooking Edinburgh, was a pleasant way to start the day.

We finally found our way to Pat's place. Pat was the mother of Pam Maultby and had visited her in Pt. Vila a year earlier.
We stopped at her place for lunch and I sampled lots of different whiskies.
Her husband was a keen instructor in the martial arts and had to instruct that night, so he left Pat and me to it, and he took our kids to the park. Pat is a delightful, lively old dear. Full of conversation and gleamy eyes that make sure your glass is never empty.
The car wandered off over the hills south out of Edinburgh back through the Border country, over the Cheviot Hills to stop at a small village in the remote Wark Forest. We found a charming B&B once an old Manse, far larger than the little chapel next to it. We were treated a well-cooked home dinner and a walk in the garden with the owners.
We were only a few miles north of Hadrian's Wall. The next day planned to walk the wall, or a part of it!

Chapter seven

Our first Roman fort to visit was called CILVRNVM. It read more like a Roman numeral than a town. This site was looked after by the National Heritage. We were the first that morning to visit the fort and made our way down the field to the fort that was just above the river North Tyne. It was close to a natural ford across the river.
The fort was mostly buried under the field, but at places, the old foundations were dug up and artists' impressions of how the building looked in former days were displayed next to them.

`

Emily Rob Roman Fort window

It was very interesting to sit in a bath that Romans sat in so many years ago. Nearby was a building in the shape of a Roman house. It housed the artefacts that were found on this site. The ones that interested me the most, were the great number of different altars that the Romans had to worship their gods.

From there we drove alongside and over Hadrian's wall until we came to the famous fort of Borcovicium better

known as Housesteads. The weather was perfect and Robert and Emily enjoyed climbing through the vent holes in the fort ruins. The fort was on top of the highest hill in the district from where we could see the wall weave its way over the rounded hills in both directions. We had a short stroll along the top of the wall; it was about 5 feet wide and well-worn. Emily fell over while trying to run down one of the steeper parts of it. It followed the ridge on this particular hill and seemed an

impossible barrier for the painted Picts to get over.
We headed south over the Pennines through the village of Alston across the moors then down the Tees Valley through very pretty stone villages until we came to Barnard Castle standing magnificently on the bend of the Tees River. From there on it was a fast trip through Scotch Corner to Cleckheaton.
It was pleasant to see the Teskey's again and tell of our wanderings. We stayed the night, drank beer and had a fine meal. Mary had all the details on the cottage at Alton where we were all to meet, together with the Garlicks, in a few weeks.
It was pouring the next morning so we motorwayed our way down to Liverpool. The tunnel under the Mersey was a toll. We were in a one-lane approach to the tunnel with no money. The cost of the toll was on the other side of the tunnel, so we drove on. It turned out to be 40p. The toll man was not too impressed with the one and two p coins we handed him. We never did get the idea of using cash points down to an easy system. It seemed that whenever we were on the road they were not around.
It didn't take long to find Dave and Jo Gibsons in Birkenhead. Their eldest boy Charles had just returned from a sports school trip fortnight in the south of France. David and I walked down to the local video shop, mainly to see the bric-a-brac shops on the way. He still enjoyed searching for and collecting old bottles. David was in the process of redesigning his house, so we were led from room to room trying to imagine the new house. Jo had just completed a year at university and was looking forward to being domestic again. These people were good friends in Pt Vila. They were always busy doing something.
From Birkenhead, we drove to Chester. It was a busy day and the streets were full of life. The centre of the town was lined with Tudor-style buildings that fronted a maze of shopping arcades. The place was full of character. Barrel organs and old men busking on the sidewalks with worn-out dancing wooden dolls. Emily and Robert both were given gas-filled balloons at one of the stores.
Robert's balloon flew away almost as soon as he got out of the shop. So back we went begging for another to quieten this little boy up.
We touched through Wales, then crossed over the Marcher plains to Shrewsbury. The Nottles live in a new housing division near to Shrewsbury. Emily soon remembered the two boys James and Alister, and Robert made friends with young Lisa's toys.
Peter, the boys and I went for a drive to have a look at the Severn Valley Railway locos at the rail sheds at Bridgnorth. There were steam engines in all stages of restoration. Peter was a keen railway buff and was a member of the SVR. We drove along the Severn River to see the first iron-made bridge. Back at Peter and Joan's place, we had a feast

on Chinese takeaway. That evening we caught up on all the events from seeing each other in Pt. Vila. Sunday was a special day for riding on the steam trains. We started our train journey at Bridgnorth. All of us into a compartment, the engine hissed, and off we went on our 22-mile trip down the line. The track followed the river most of the way. Being Sunday the riverbank was littered with fishermen. One every 100 yards down the entire length of the river. There were a lot of different trains on this line, so it was possible to stop at one of the stations and take the next train. We stopped at a small station, Arley. Here we walked down to a pub on the riverside and with pints of ale ate our sandwiches in the beer garden, looking up from the river bank at those lively steam engines going past, a great site. No wonder the fishermen all looked up at us as we passed by. The stop at Kidderminster, the end of the line, was a disappointment. Disused rail sheds and a bleak platform. The trip back to Bridgnorth brought us back through all those delightful little stations again. It was a pleasant weekend with the Nottles, and good to have spent some time with them again. They were the people who lived in the house above Pt. Vila Wharf before us and made sure we could rent it after they left.

The cottage at Old Colwyn Bay was a welcome change to B&B's. It was a small dark stone cottage right on a stream that you had to cross on a footbridge to get to it. It was close to the centre of the town but in a quiet, nearly inaccessible street. The owner met us and was not too upset with us arriving two days late. The kids and I followed the stream to the sea, where we found a very long break wall, holding back the stormy sea.

We left Old Colwyn the next day to drive through the north of Wales to Abersoch. To spend a day and evening with the Paynes. We stopped in the town of Betws y Coed in the Cambrian Mountains to watch the fast-flowing rivers meet. Then up the mountain road to the slate country. At Blaenau Ffestiniog we took a tour through one of the oldest and largest slate mines, Llechwedd.

Emily watching slate cutter in the slate mine

The place was packed with visitors, after a good wait we boarded a small train that took us deep into the mine. We got off the train at various places where guides gave us descriptions of mining methods of the past. This was the first time we had heard people speaking Welsh, as most of the people working there conversed in Welsh to each other.

We wound down the mountain road to the coast. Caught up with all the holiday traffic until we got to Abersoch. The holiday season was in full swing, rain or no rain.

It didn't take long to find the apartment where Charlie, Beth and the kids were staying. We walked through the village down to the beach to make sand castles. The ladies tried to find a doctor to look at Roberts' red eye. They finally found one, an ex-Lions rugby player, who predicted that Robert would play for the All Blacks.

That evening we again attempted to have a family meal at an Italian restaurant. Robert did his best to rearrange the place and came out drenched from split water beakers.

We stayed the night in a B&B in the village. The next day although windy, we decided to have a beach picnic. It was a lot of fun. We flew the kites and sat around in jumpers enjoying our beach picnic. It ended with a rush to the cars through a downpour. We said farewell to the holidaying Paynes and drove back to Old Colwyn via Caernarfon and Conwy.

Picnic Wales beach with the Paynes

Back at our cottage again, we decided to have a couple of quiet days. There was an indoor pool in Colwyn that The Kids and I swam in a few times. And a small amusement park on the sea wall. I managed to phone Debbie Trebilco and we worked out dates to stay in Cornwall.

We drove out one afternoon to see the beach resort of Llandudno. The seafront was

lined with different coloured old-style hotels; on one side of the beach was a Victorian pier. The beach was deserted, but the pier, with its carnival atmosphere, was packed. It didn't inspire visions of a great holiday retreat for me, but it seemed to be well patronized by the Liverpudlians.

Saturday came fast; again we took to the crowded roads to find our way to Alton. To spend a week with the Garlicks and Teskeys in the country.

Chapter eight

On the way to Alton, we decided to try an English pub for lunch. There were many quaint, thatched pubs in villages on the way, but we decided to find one near Alton, preferably with a duck pond. The distance between villages seemed to increase and the number of pubs decreased. Out of hunger and desperation, we at last stopped at the next pub we saw advertising food. This happened to be Cheadle. Lunch was off today, but we could have sandwiches. So with stale ham sandwiches, we sat outside in the cold beer garden as kids weren't allowed in this pub, thinking of the quaint pubs we had

passed. We decided then if we wanted to have a pub lunch, the first pub with a pleasant beer garden and advertising food would be the one to stop at.
We arrived at Alton early in the afternoon. The sun had come out and we drove down to the river. Mary had given us directions to the cottage, but we lost them. Next to the bridge was the Talbot Hotel. An old pub with a beer garden overlooking the river to a disused railway station. A pint tastes much better sitting outside with the sun shining and having nothing better to do than count the geese in the field across the road. Back at the bridge again, Robert and I made daisy chains out of weeds, as we watched the cars pass by. Soon down the hill came the Teskeys. We followed them down the farm lane to the cottage. Garlicks arrived minutes later. Out they piled.

House at Alton with Garlic's, Teskey's and families

The owners of the cottage were still busy preparing it for us. It was a beautifully situated cottage. On a quiet farm road, just up the bank from a grassy sloping field that edged the river. From the cottage, the outlook was along the wooded river valley, or across to the back of Alton Towers theme park behind a long thickly wooded ridge that followed the river. High above the treetops,
we could see cable cars travelling across the distant trees. The cottage was old with different floor levels, a steep slate roof with three bedrooms upstairs. Down stairs a kitchen with an old coal stove and a cosy lounge room. There was also a courtyard with a well-kept lawn and flower gardens. Mary had chosen well. The three ladies sorted out

the accommodation, the kids explored the well-kept garden, and we men were kept busy assembling a bunk bed that had just arrived in kit form for the two Rachels.
Ladies disappeared off to Alton for a look and we completed the setting up of the house. Tea was served; we all sat around a very large table in the kitchen and had a farmhouse tea. Dave needed some medicinal attention for his back, so the three of us decided to go for a walk. It was nearing dusk, the pace quickened, and soon we were in the Talbot Pub downing the first pint. The bar stools were old saddles and difficult to want to get out of.
Back at the cottage, Marge had unpacked and given us our developed photos and mail. We were pleased with the photos and showed them around. The coal fire burning, we sat around the kitchen table till late.
Sunday was a slow start. Dave has a wonderful habit of bringing us all a cup of tea in bed to greet the morning. Eventually, we all finished breakfast and put on our walking shoes. Across the narrow footbridge to the old disused railway line.
We walked along the track until we came close to Alton. It was a perfect day. The countryside that we had come to was made up of steep little hills and grassy farm slopes. The river churned slowly winding its way between the hills, through wooded valleys. Back at the cottage, the test series had begun. Stuart to bat, and the shed to be the boundary. It was a tough test with a stop for drinks mid afternoon soon the kids off early to bed; we ended Sunday with cards, trivia pursuit and red wine.
Monday was the big big day. Dave started it with cups of tea and Stuart and the two Rachels were ready and waiting. Up the hill to Alton Towers. It was England's answer to Disneyland. We were there in time for the gates to open. Alton Towers was set on top of the hill that overlooked our cottage. It was once a large estate with well-landscaped gardens. Parts of the estate were turned into carnival funfairs with different themes. All the rides were included in the entry fee, so it was a matter of getting to do most of the rides to get the best value, and we all certainly did!
After rubber-bouncing boats down rapids and Emily and I sliding down waterfalls in a log, we took the cable cars across to the fast lane. Roller coasters and all sorts of whirly things. Graham and I tackled the roller coaster that did a corkscrew turn. It was the first time I had been on one of these; Sue followed on the next ride. With the adrenaline pumping, we could now tackle anything.
Lunchtime we sat in a large food hall and ate processed garbage that the kids called hamburgers. Robert and I walked around a huge model train layout in the basement of the old tower. The little train stopped and we put coins in a carriage that later deposited them further down

the track into a model lake. We all met again at the circus tent. The show was great with beautiful acrobatic girls, trapeze artists and a musical clown.
Robert and Emily, wearing plastic clown hats, thoroughly enjoyed it. Afterwards, all of us on our backs on the floor of the 360-degree cinema expecting things to fall out of the sky on us. Back to another circus show. This time two Rachels had their faces painted like clowns. It was a very full day; we were last to leave. On the ride back to the car park the trolley that took us went down a dip, and we all went wheee for the last time that day.
The next morning all the men and Rachel's were sent to Uttoxeter to buy the meat. We parked the car on one side of town and shopped in a supermarket on the other. So with full shopping trolleys, we raced through the town to the car to find that we had parked in another supermarket car park! Buying the meat in the local butchers was different. The entrance to the shop was blocked with sides of beef hanging down from ceiling hooks. Our order made his day.
Dave and Stuart smartened up to a haircut. Phil, Mary's brother arrived that afternoon in his trusty old Morris. We resumed day two of the test series and finished the day with a bar-b-que in the courtyard.
Wednesday started with Dave bringing up the tea and Graham busy in the kitchen making custom kai. Staffordshire oat cakes. A sort of a large thick pancake with ham and cheese baked on top.
Nice! We jammed into the two cars and headed off to Dove Dale.
This was a very well-walked popular track along the Dove River through a gorge. From the car park, we walked to a row of stepping stones that crossed the river. These stepping stones were the only way to cross the river. Old age pensioners, ladies in fine shoes and wet smelly dogs all competed with each other in trying to cross the river on these stones in both directions at the same time!
We had a picnic on the other side after which Stuart and Rachel swam. Graham offered them a Mars bar if they would go in.
Dave climbed the highest hill and we all lay on the grass watching him pant up the hill.
Mothers and toddlers walked back to the car, while the rest of us walked along the river through the gorge past cliffs and caves to a track that led across the river straight up the steep hill .it seemed to take ages to get to the top. We lost the track somewhere along the way. On the top, we walked along a ridge until we came to a farmhouse. Afternoon teas all around. We headed back in the direction of the cars, from high above the valley we could see the pub where the Tranters honeymooned. We descended a very steep hill through thistles and sheep droppings back to the cars.
Back at the cottage, we looked after the kids while Marge and Dave

went for a drink at the pub and worked out their next holidays. After they returned, Teskey's and I found a pub in the village, it had an old game of bar Skittles and good beer.
Graham served his special curry and we sweated the rest of the night away. Cards and red wine appeared on the table, after, all tired we made our way up the stairs to sleep. Thursday was Graham's day to sit indoors and watch the cricket.
We packed a picnic lunch and headed off to Chatsworth. A very large manor house in a secluded country area. In its former days, the owners had a complete village removed because it was an eye-sore to ride past. We stopped for our picnic on the banks of the river that flowed through the estate. We ate our sandwiches in the cold and played ball with the kids to warm up. Other brave kids were swimming in the river. Dave and I walked through the gardens with the kids while the ladies had a tour of the house. The gardens were very spacious, with one stream cascading down a long stepped waterway.
Robert and Ben chased the ducks into the large pond that had a huge single waterspout at one end.
The rain came, and we ran to the shelter of the tea house where Robert decided to go his way, After a panic search for the elusive little man, we found him happily strolling down the car park in search of a ride home. Meanwhile, a biplane flew overhead trailing letters advertising a funfair further up the road. On the way back to the cottage we decided to take detours through various little villages.
After the long day out we again shifted all the seating furniture outside and fired up the bar-b-ques. Olive Macmillan, Who was a friend from Pt. Vila now a resident of Alton, arrived, and soon after also arrived Mo and Nigel, long-time friends of the Garlicks, with their modern daughters, they all joined us for a very lively, end to the day.
Dave continued with his early morning tea deliveries and I became the fire stoker. I stayed home with the smaller kids,
Dave, Graham and the big kids left early to tackle another track through the Dove Dale gorges. The ladies left for a ladies' day of shopping and browsing. Later that afternoon, lunch at an old school that had a craft room and a vegetarian restaurant. Then off for a tour of the local pottery and fine china shops. Called into Mary's Mum for a cuppa tea.
Later that afternoon the deciding match was pl

ayed to end the test series. I think there was a winning team. Being our last night, we dressed in our finest, polished our shoes, and came down to dinner. The Roast good wines, and trimmings gave the meal a very special touch. We even found time to have a round of trivial pursuit, Mele rules.

The week had been very busy, yet we found time to take strolls through the fields, watch the dusk settle from the hill above the cottage and also find time to be together as a big busy family.

Saturday morning was a wet, confused, rainy, rushed clean up and hurried farewells.

Chapter Nine

It didn't take long until we were far out of Alton and zooming down the M5. Motorway traffic becomes very stressful, it seems that all the drivers are pushing you, urging you to go faster and faster.

We passed several exits from the M5 and finally got off at Avonmouth. It was low tide; the river Avon looked more like a long mud flat that followed the road. At one point, high above us was a very old iron suspension bridge. Rock climbers were scaling
the cliffs on the side of the road. They were fully outfitted as if Mt. Everest was just beyond the top of the cliff.

We arrived in Maiden Bradley to find the cottage locked. Drove to Warminster, collected the key and returned to our cottage at Maiden Bradley. It seemed a long day's drive; the old spongy bed in the small upstairs bedroom quickly took us away to dreamland.

The cottage was on the main road through the small village; it was a small cottage, with very low doors and squashed between the other cottages. Maiden Bradley's cottages were the homes of very long-time residents. We were seen as foreigners with noisy kids and took up one of the few car-parking spots in front of the row of cottages.

Sunday, we drove through the wheat field country across to Salisbury then down to the New Forest area to visit the Paynes again at their home in the village of Alderholt. It was nice to see them after their Welsh holiday. Charlie's old friends and family were over for the day from London.

With kids on our shoulders, we all went for a walk in the warm Sunday sun through a nearby forest. The kids loved climbing over the styles and playing Knights with branches. Charlie bar-be-qued and we took turns hitting the cricket ball over the fence. Robert didn't wander much inside the Paynes house. He walked into one room to come face to face with an actual stuffed lion. Charlie and his friend, his best man, were busy planning a walk through the mountains of north Wales, It seemed a good long trot!

We left late in the afternoon, stopped at Salisbury for Kentucky Chicken then drove back through the wheat area, with all its colours as the sunset.

Monday, washing day. This was becoming a routine! We eventually found a launderette in Frome. Far to the west, we could see the White Horse. We drove across the Salisbury Plain to Stonehenge. The place was packed with sightseers. Eventually, we made our way to the monument. It was roped off and had glass sentry boxes that sheltered grey-faced uniformed men, who shouted and blew whistles at people who dared to cross the ropes. 10 years before I came here. We were shown through the monument by informative guides who pointed out various inscriptions on the stones, some ancient, some from

Christopher Wren's time. It seems too many people since have wanted to add to these. We walked around the roped path and saw the tall stones from different angles. A tall, very annoying young man kept following us and taking flash photos of Robert and Emily discretely from his hip level. The whole place was tense and unnerving.

Walked around Stonehenge

We drove through the army villages past rows of numbered houses and official signposts. There were lots of rifle ranges and rutted tracks leading of the road that were well-used for training by army tanks.

On top of the hill, we overlooked Westbury and walked over the ancient Bratton Camp, where long ago, men my size, proudly surveyed their domain. On the hillside below us was the White horse that we saw from Frome. Emily climbed down to sit in its eye.

The Paynes recommended that we go to Longleat Safari Park. So Tuesday was set aside for a safari.

We arrived early, bought a family ticket and played in the playground, waiting for the park to open. This was one of the first estates to encourage a safari park as an income. There were many added attractions, a narrow gauge railway that took you through part of the park. A bird show with parrots on bikes in prams and cleverly able to count using bells. Even Dr. Who's Tardis and nasty Daleks. We walked through a maze made out of hedges and warmed up in the Butterfly house. The small lake had an Island with gorillas living on it. We took a boat ride loaded with kids and buckets of fish. The lake had sea lions that almost jumped into the boat to get their offer of fish. The

gorillas thought it was too cold to come out of their house to see us. They were cosy inside watching T.V. I think Neighbours was on at the time.
Back at the manor house, we found a room with Victorian doll houses and then walked through the manor kitchen complete with working kitchen maids. Robert didn't last too long inside the main area of the House he wanted to sit on the desk that his lordship had left signed documents.

On the way out we drove through the safari park. I was very impressed! There were sections with lions, cheetahs, giraffes, elephants, rhinos, and monkeys. It took a long time to drive through it all. In the cheetah compound. Annoyingly a man kept whistling and shouting rude words at me. It wasn't until some time later that I realized I had the sunroof open. The monkey's compound was the most popular with the little beggars all over the car. It was a full day. Although it rained most of the time, we were certainly in for a different treat.
The next day we went to Bath. We found a travel agent and booked our ferry trips to the continent and back again. We were about halfway through our stay in Europe. We bought sandwiches and walked down to the river to have them watch the water cascade down the weir and the canal boats sheltered below. The walk along the river and across the covered bridge to the indoor market was one of the prettiest town walks we did in the UK. Inside Bath Cathedral it was dark and musty with battle-torn flags lining the walls. Outside a juggler on tall stilts that had baby gumboots on the bottom was entertaining a large crowd Emily loved it, broken eggs and all. We filed through the Roman baths. It was a chocka block with people.
Packed with people following fast-speaking guides, starring puzzled at bits of caved stones, or gaping into dark drains below the floor. Robert got bored. Started screaming, so I tried to get past the people in front

of us to get out. It seems the continental tourist in front had quickly learned the English habit of staying in queue and would not let me pass. With Robert on my shoulders, he found a solution. He started rudely kicking the heads of the people in front who then quickly let us by, muttering rude suggestions in all languages.
We met Sue and Emily along the side of the large bath. It was sunny and not so crowded. Very pleasant to sit by this large pool that was used so long ago.
We drove across the river to the tall circular Victorian terrace houses. Bath must have been a popular retreat for the better-off Victorian English. That evening the small family restaurant across the road from our cottage was open. We all went across to have a meal. It was pleasant, we were the only people there and Emily and Robert left the table to go out the back to play with the owner's children while we were left to finish our meal in peace.
Sue drove me to Westbury the next morning and I took the 125mph speed train to London. It certainly was a fast train. In London, I popped out of the ground to find I was across from the statue of Eros in Piccadilly. It took a little while to find the THAI airlines. I changed the return flights to an earlier date. But was put on a waiting list for confirmation. Some unfortunate people were being very loud, having found out that they were not confirmed on their return flight to Australia and might have to wait up to six weeks to get out. I left THAI not too sure that we would be on an earlier flight!
This was my first time in London for nearly ten years. I walked down streets I could remember, and watched the pigeons at Trafalgar. Wandered through Soho and eventually found myself back on the train to Westbury. I arrived too late. Sue had missed me.

I trained further to Warminster and walked to a pub about halfway to the cottage. It rained so 1 found a warm spot by the bar. We had

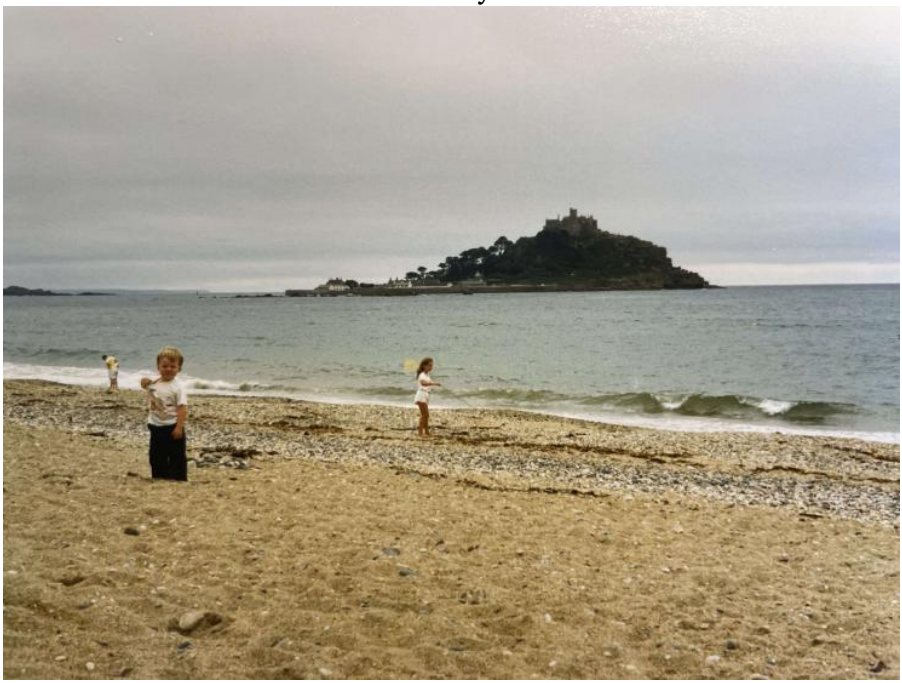
arranged for me to ring the phone box outside the cottage at eight if we didn't meet. This all worked out well. It was my first day on my own this holiday.
Friday we drove to the Mendip Hills. The first stop was the City of Wells. We walked through the gardens and watched the swans in the bishop's palace's moat. Later watched the clock strike inside the cathedral. The front of the cathedral was decorated with hundreds of statues.
Cheddar was a busy attraction. We parked near to the caves. The tourist village at the entrance of the caves was buzzing with souvenir hunters. We went into the Gough's cave. It wasn't crowded and at different places along the walk, you could stop for a commentary on the caves.
Further in the cave, some beautifully lit pools reflected colourful mirror images.
The drive up through the Cheddar Gorge to the top of the Mendip hills was also spectacular. We decided to stop at a pub for lunch. This time it was to be the first Pub we would come to. It worked well. It was a lovely old pub with a sheltered garden. The sun was out and we could be in no better place.
Later we met the Paynes at their place and walked to the family pub on the corner. It was a nice end to a long day and great to go over the week's activities with friends. We sat down to a big pub meal of fish and chips; kids fell off the swings and crashed into each other on the slides. The car drove itself back to the cottage, or so it seemed.
Saturday we packed, off to Cornwall. I hoped to have a stop at Beer to see the model trains and make sand castles on the beach.

Chapter ten

It was now mid-August; the holiday season was in full swing. We left our cottage in Maiden Bradley, stopped briefly at Warminster and headed on our way to Cornwall. At Yeovil, we entered the mainstream of weekend motorists on the A35. It moved at a snail's pace. The sun was out; we turned right at the next road. This was our introduction to yet smaller country lanes than we had ever seen before. They were almost deserted.
We travelled through these hedge-lined lanes hoping nothing was coming in the opposite direction, occasionally it did and somehow we always found a place to pass. We stopped near a gate that led to a field by a small stream and picnicked. Lots of the intersections were not signposted or had place names that were not on our map, so we headed south. To our surprise, we drove into Axminster through a back road. From there on we were back on the map and decided to go to the beach at Seaton.
No need for buckets or spades the seaside was all pebbles. It was nice

to lie in the sun and hear the sea again. Up on the hill at Beer, we visited the miniature railway village. It was closed on Saturdays. But the view was worth it.
The drive through Devon across the high toll bridge at Plymouth was mostly on the motorway. It was late in the afternoon when we entered Cornwall. I phoned Geoff's dad who later welcomed us at the Trebilco's house in Truro. The Trebilcos were still on the yacht somewhere off the Isle of Scilly. Later that evening we received a phone call from Norman Shackley, a friend and ham radio nut from Pt. Vila. They were staying in the small village of St. Tudy, in a cottage belonging to the Black also from Pt. Vila.
We found our way to St. Tudy the following day. The Black's cottage was old stone and the village very Cornish. They had made friends with an elderly lady next door who had lived in St. Tudy all her life. After a beer in the local and a good feed on scones and clotted cream back at the cottage we then headed across to the neighbouring village to see some Morris Dancers. They were a lively group, all men dressed in fine white lace and country pants, dancing in circles, bashing sticks and singing songs. There was an untidy, short, bearded man with a pig's bladder blown up and he wore a hat with feathers and decorative objects on it. He was running amongst the dancers like a drunken heckler at a political rally. Norman and I decided to climb the highest mountain in Cornwall that afternoon. Rough Tor. It wasn't much of a climb, at the top we could see across to the castle at Tintagel on the coast where King Arthur was born, and to the other side across the Bodwin Moor. To our surprise, there were two radio hams on top of the mountain with a portable rig trying to transmit to faraway places. It was late when we arrived back at Truro and we had arranged to have a beach day with the Shackleys and Peter and Caroline the next day. We met the Shackleys, Peter (a vet who had lived for some time in Vanuatu) and Caroline at Peter's mum's house in Penzance. Caroline was the sister in charge at the Pt. Vila Hospital when Emily was born. We made our way to a secluded beach near Lands End called Porthgwarra. It was a small cove that had an entrance carved to it through the sandstone to allow the small fishing boats access to the cove. Real smugglers cove. Peter brought out the homemade champagne and the kids braved the cold water for a swim. We walked along the cliff path south towards Lands End from the cove. The path followed the edge of the cliffs with the sea a few hundred feet below. It was a clear day and the coastal scenery was spectacular.
On the way back to Penzance we followed the coastal road to another coastal village Mousehole. Peter took us to his favourite pub and we sat on the sea wall drinking pints and watching boats return to port at nearby Penzance. Back at Peter's mum's place, we sat outside to end

the day on fish and chips.
Tuesday was a rest day. I went into town to arrange traveller's cheques for our continental trip, had a hair cut and back at the house played with the kids while Sue had a shopping day.
Wednesday was a day of searching for ancestors. Some of Sue's dad's family came from this area too. Our first stop was a small village near Penzance called Gulval. It had a plaque, Best-kept Village 1964. We walked through the graveyard of the church to find old headstones with Jelbert. The graveyard was overgrown and a man passing through thought we were looking for the pirate's headstone that some people come to see. We picnicked on the beach looking out to St. Michael's Mount Island out in the bay.



St Michaels Mount Island at high tide Robert on the beach

It was a windy day; even the windsurfers were reluctant to take to the water.
Further down the coast, we came to St. Buryans to see the church where the Jelberts were married. Then across to Sancreed where he was born. These were two very small rural villages that looked as if they hadn't changed since old Jelbert left many years before. The Church at Sancreed was small, with beautifully carved
wooden panels in the ceiling.
At Lands End, we competed to get car parking. The kids slept, and Sue walked down the path to see the last bit of mainland Britain.
Fog settled along the coast. We drove through it along the coast north to St. Ives. A very popular holiday spot with long white beaches and

enough guesthouses to house all of Vanuatu. It was after 5, so the roads into the quay area of town were open. We drove slowly through the stream of people returning from the beaches to their guesthouses. The old centre was full of character, with its neat little stone quay. We drove through the sprawl of Redruth to arrive back at Truro in the dark.

Thursday was the day we expected the Trebilcos to return. It was strange to welcome them back, opening their front door and asking them inside. That evening we relived old times in Pt. Vila. And caught up on who did what and where. Geoff and Debbie hadn't changed much, Debbie sounded more Cornish and the kids had grown to the same size as ours and made friends easily. I went with Geoff to pick up what was left on his yacht. It was moored just off Loe Beach on the Carrick Roads. That is the name given to the huge estuary of the Fal. We motored out to Tsambika a wooden 36 ft ketch. It was nearly dark, being back on the water and going past all these yachts stirred my sailing passion.

The next morning we awoke saying good morning to each other, and now felt very much guests of the Trebilcos. Sue and Debbie had organized their day, so Geoff and I had the day free to go sailing. Carrick Roads in daylight was huge. A boat owner's paradise. Back in Pt. Vila, Geoff used to tell us that he missed the sailing he had back at home, and we wondered how anything could compare to Vila harbour. Carrick Roads was larger than Sydney Harbour. It took no time to set sail. We headed inland to where there were huge tankers, freighters, and channel ferry boats all laid up waiting for a decision on their future. Then down the estuary towards Falmouth. The boat sailed beautifully and I was in yachties heaven. We motored into a waterway that had a jetty from a very old pub called Pandora. Tied her up, had a beer and a meal, and again left the jetty just before the tide got too low.

That evening Geoff with his full collection of Moody Blues, good drinks and maps of Cornwall spread out, we talked the night away.

With both families on board, we sailed across to St. Mawes. It was a sunny Saturday and the water was alive with sailing boats. St Mawes was having a regatta day and many of the old workboats in their traditional gaff rig were racing. We moored close to the town centre and walked down to the pier where there were swimming races. Back on board again with sandwiches and Lumbrusco wine, we watched the old boats sail past. Geoff grew up on these waters and his local knowledge was very entertaining. Across from where we were was a cove that he first sneaked Debbie into. The sail back to Loe Beach went easily; we passed close by the entrance to the Pandora Pub. The boat had a natural lean in that direction.

Sailing on Tsambika on the Fal

Debbie treated us to a very tasty evening meal and kept that up all the time we were there. Geoff insisted that he always sat down to meals like these.

Sunday we followed Geoff in our car and had a look at the Cornwall on the other side of the Fal. Our first stop was Mevagissey, an old coastal port with a sheltered harbour. We had to park at the entrance to the town and walk down the steep hill to the quay.

Further along the coast, we stopped at a very small coastal village. Polkerris. This has a small sandy beach protected by a wall. Above the beach, a Pub that served a good Sunday lunch poured beer out of barrels and gave us a chance to eat outside with the kids playing in the sand below, or so we thought. Robert in search of ice creams wandered past the pub out of sight. When we found him he didn't see what all the fuss was about.

Geoff and I walked along the coastal path to get a good view of this little cove. This was the same coastal path that we were on earlier near Lands End. From Polkerris we went over the hill to Fowey. Daphne Du Maurier's home place. It has a reasonably large protected harbour. With steep hills all around it that were full of terraced houses following narrow streets down to the waterside. At the entrance, it was narrow with an old fort on one side. We walked to the fort and looked up at the harbour at Fowey. The harbour was full of pleasure craft and the streets with visitors.

We wandered through the streets and past the yacht club that Geoff

would love to join. Ice cream on the sea wall and watched the passing parade. There were lots of second-hand and collector's bookshops open and the kids played games in telephone boxes.
That evening Geoff brought out his books on the old working boats and early boat yards that his family had been involved in.
Monday was a sort-out day. We decided to go through all our stuff and send two suitcases by bus back to the Garlicks, to make room in the Volvo. That evening Sue and I went for a stroll along a path from the Pandora pub to a jetty a few miles along the estuary. The kids stayed back home and we had a very pleasant time on our own. Also a few too many drinks back at the old low-ceiling pub.
Tuesday was a beach day. We drove across to St. Agnes to walk down a famous lane called Stippy Steppy. It was a row of old cottages following a narrow lane straight down the hill from the township of St. Agnes. The hill was steep and the cottages were stepped into the hill. At the bottom was a cove with a sandy beach we played there, built sandcastles and played in the cold stream that emptied onto the beach. We moved north to Perranporth where Debbie grew up and had sandwiches up on the headland overlooking the beach at Perranporth. Sue shopped at the kids' shop and Robert and I checked the fish out at the fishmongers.

Down south in the Portreath area, we walked through the old mining areas on the steep coast, There was one area that had many abandoned engine houses close together. These fascinated me and I wanted to see one restored to working condition. But that was to be later on.
Geoff came home early and we both sailed to the Pandora again had beers and motored in the dark back to Loe Beach. Nice end to the day.
The next day it was rainy. We packed the kids in the car, wellies and raincoats and headed off to Malpas near Truro to catch the ferry down the Fal to Falmouth. It was an hour's trip in a ferryboat that had only

20 or so of its 200 passengers. The trip down the Fal was becoming familiar territory. Falmouth was wet and cold. Debbie wanted to look at kids' bikes to buy; we looked for Guernsey's. Then to the top of a windy hill to have sandwiches overlooking Falmouth to Flushing across the bay.

Thursday was one of those days that we tried to pack in all that we wanted to do in the last few days left in Cornwall. We drove directly to the Lizard Point past the large dish antennas at Goonhilly to stop near the cliffs at Lizard. It was a clear day; we could see the fishing boats around the point. We walked among the seaweed on the small beach and back at the cliff top we bought a serpentine vase from a small shop that lathe turned them in the shop's workshop.

Further up the coast was the small village, Cadgwith with its colourful little fishing boats high on the beach and many thatched-roof cottages. We stopped near Porthleven to walk along the bank of the Loe, which had once taken ships up to Helston, now a large backwater with the entrance silted up. There were lots of birds as the walk took us through a forest. We bought two huge pastries at Porthleven and ate them on the way to Pool. This is where there are two Cornish engines. We walked up the wooden staircase to the top of the engine house and watched the giant piston drive the shafts up and down turning the giant wheel outside. These were the earliest steam engines and were used to pump water out of the mines and lift the miners between the levels of the mine.

From Pool, we drove through the old mining country to The Pit at Cam Brea. This is still used in the summer months for Wesleyan church services.

Robert and Emily enjoyed running up and down the Pit's grassy steps. We drove through lots of small villages in the area to find one called Twelve Heads, an old mine area where the Trebilcos wanted to build a house.

That evening we returned to this area to have a night out at a superb restaurant called the Counting House. It is situated in the middle of the old mining area with ruins of old mining buildings and engine chimneys highlighting the surrounding hills as evening settled in. We were the only patrons and had special service.

Friday we had a drive through the surrounding area. First to Come To Good. This is an old thatched Quaker house. Then across the ferry at King Harry's Ferry to see a church in St. Just in Roselands. This church was hidden in a valley and escaped being sacked when ships invaded the area in the early centuries. It was a peaceful little cove. We bumped into a talkative Cornishman on the beach who chatted about the area for some time. Up on the hill in Veryan are Round Houses. These small round houses were built as entrances to the village and

being round had no corners for the devils to hide in.
Saturday we were back on Tsambika, sailed out of the entrance of the Carrick Roads onto the calm seas and slowly made our way up the coast to Portscatho. It was pleasant to see the area that we had driven over the day before from the sea. The Kids behaved well on the boat and when we anchored off the beach. I jumped overboard for my first swim in Cornwall. It was freezing. The sail back was even slower with the sea calm and hardly any wind. We passed close to the lighthouse near St Mawes and eventually arrived at Loe Beach where Sue had her first swim, falling fully clothed out of the dinghy. It was a full day's sail and very pleasant.
That day one of Geoff's mates had become a dad so the three of us went to Malpas to drink to the baby's health.
Sunday our last day with the Trebilco's, we put up the small plastic swimming pool, the kids splashed, we had lunch out in the patio in the sunshine and latter went down to the park at Truro where there was a small fun fair. The kids spent most of their time in the jumping castle. It was a day out with the kids and lots of fun. Debbie excelled herself with the evening meal. Latter that evening we planned our trip to Brittany and wrote down suggested trips.

Sue overlooking Cornish Coastline

Cornwall was a very pleasant change to our cottage stay and for us nice to be with the Trebilco's as an extended faintly; also I enjoyed every minute of the sailing.

Chapter eleven

It was a dull, grey sky, on Monday morning when we said farewell to the Trebilcos and headed to Tavistock in Devon on the edge of the Dartmoor Forest. The Volvo climbed up onto the moors; it was
rainy
grey and looked every bit inhospitable. In the centre is Princetown with the Famous H.M. Prison. We took the smaller roads that followed the Dart River down through the forest and the roads became smaller and the bridges, stony arches. It was a welcome pretty spot after the moorlands above. We found the Stevens at home in Brixham. They were also friends from Pt. Vila who where selling their house and was ready to move to Perth, Australia. We had lunch and walked through the town to the fishing wharves. Richard was very tied up with the fishing industry. Brixham was the largest fishing centre in Devon and smelt like it too.

We waited until late in the afternoon to continue on our way to Weymouth. It was a holiday Monday and the area where the Stevens lived was also close to well-visited beaches. We again passed Seaton and as the evening started, we drove along the Dorset coast through some very beautiful areas and towns.

The Channel Ferry loaded our Volvo on board and we crammed into a four-berth-sleeping compartment and left mainland Britain about midnight.

St. Peter's Port in Guernsey was our first stop and first glimpse of the Channel Islands. It was a smooth crossing and somehow we all managed to sleep in the small cabin compartment. A few hours later we were unloading at St. Helier on Jersey.

I had worked here for 3 months ten years ago and was very keen to see the Island again with the family. The Tourist Bureau was helpful and quickly found us a private hotel in the country.

We had a quick walk around the town, I tried to find NCR but it had moved. The Private hotel was in the centre of the Island and very comfortable with huge beds and a bathroom. We drove to St Ouen to play on the beach. This beach was the length of the west of Jersey it was warm and had large dunes. I returned to St. Helier to buy fish and chips and that night we all welcomed an early sleep on a steady bed. The private hotel had a guest's bar that sold the local Mary Ann beer. It was nice to get the kids to sleep and have a drink in comfort downstairs in the bar.

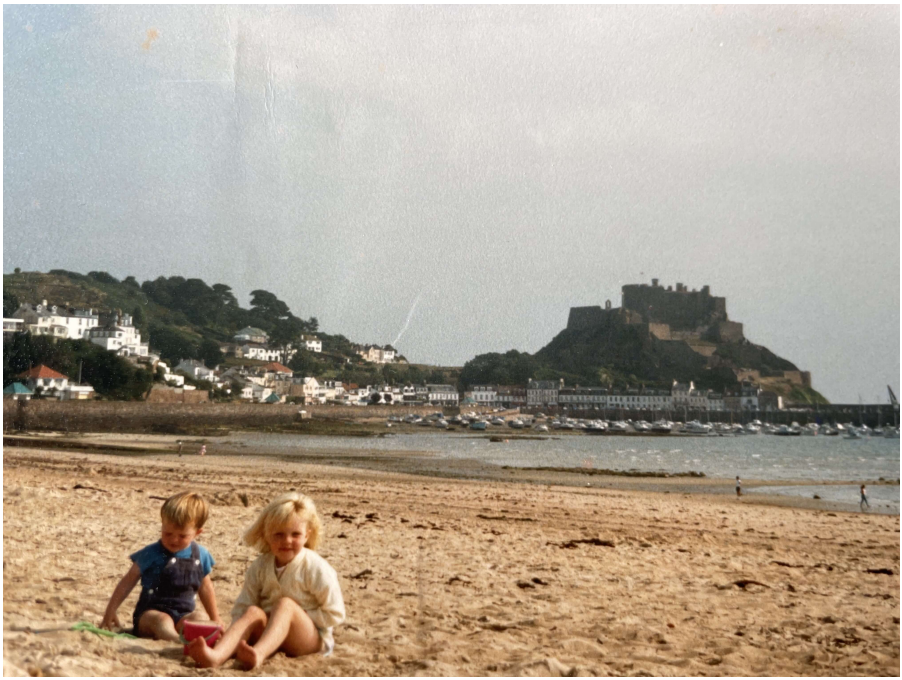
The sun came out the next day and we headed north to see the bays on the north of the Island. The roads were small and lined with stone walls. We had lunch on the beach at Bon Nuit Bay.

Bon Nuit Bay beach East Jersey

Nearby was the Gerald Durrell Zoo, at Trinity. It was an excellent zoo well laid out and most of the animals were endangered species that they were trying to breed. Families or organisations sponsored all the animals. It was a great day for the kids and us too. Robert and Emily enjoyed running from cage to cage trying to find the animals. One of the gorillas smashed his fist against the
glass window we were seeing him through, I jumped back and Robert thought it was hilarious. We drove to the top of the East Coast and stopped for a while looking down the coast to Rozel.

Back in St. Helier, I booked us and the car passage to France. It was only 20 miles away but it was costing us three times the fare from Weymouth. Kids in bed, we again relaxed over a few drinks at the hotel and watched TV.

The next day we did some sightseeing on the south and southeast of the island. It was still foggy, but we went to the southern tip, La Corbiere and took narrow roads to St. Aubin's where it was low tide. The tidal drop was about 25 feet and at low tide, the mono-hull sailing boats sat upright in their cradles on the sea floor. Through the road tunnel at St. Helier and up the East Coast to Gorey. We stopped on the beach below St. Origel Castle. From there we walked into the small Town and found a shop that sold Guernsey's. I finally bought a Guernsey. We even had someone take a photo of us with the town in the background. There was a fishing boat with a pirate's flag flying from it. Emily was sure it was full of pirates.



On the beach at St Heliers Jersey before leaving for France

St Heliers beach just before we left Jersey for France

I went into town to organize green card insurance for the car. The car was being freighted to France and needed this insurance to be cleared in France. A reluctant, but helpful girl arranged this for me in the last few

minutes of her working day. I gave her a bottle of cognac out of sheer relief. We dined in the hotel that evening. It was the most pleasant hotel we stayed in, in all our travels.

Packed once again, we dropped the car off at the wharf and set off to walk the causeway to Elizabeth Castle. The castle was built on a rocky Island in the bay. It had lots of walls and modern German bunkers built in it. Behind the castle was another rocky island with a small chapel built on it. It was the home of St. Helier many years before. We walked back into town, picnicked in the park and went souvenir hunting for the rest of the time before leaving on the hydrofoil to St. Malo in France. Just before we boarded the hydrofoil we saw across the harbour, a crane loading our Volvo into the hull of a small freighter. It looked very unsafe hanging there in mid-air.

Chapter Twelve

The Hydrofoil trip to St. Malo took nearly two hours. Robert and I sat on the little Deck out the back and looked at the old city walls as we entered the port. From the terminal, it was a short walk to the old city and once through the wall, we started to search for a hotel. We found one easily and my French seemed to get us by. Near the hotel was a

Creperrie, where we sat down for our first French meal and drank cider out of bowls.
With Robert in the pushchair, we walked through the narrow streets, past sidewalk cafes, lots of small restaurants, and boutique shops, and then along the top of the city wall back to our hotel. We certainly felt we were in France. St Malo was a beautiful introduction to the continental way of life.
Breakfast at the hotel was a grand affair. Although not much to eat, a great fuss was made over the breakfast. It was pouring rain when we left the hotel in search of our car. We were sent to the wrong wharf and when we finally did find the Volvo we were drenched. The drive out of St. Malo was easy. The roads to the south of Brittany were quiet and easy to follow. After about an hour's drive we came to a large hypermarket. Wheeling the kids on trolleys through the supermarket, listening to husky singers on the p.a. and deciding what ciders and cheeses to buy made us all the more aware that we were in France.
About halfway to Concarneau, we stopped at a town called Josselin. This was a medieval township with a grand castle at the riverside.
We eventually found a house letting agency in Concarneau and they had a large four-bedroom house to let at off-season prices in a small coastal village about ten miles away. It suited us fine! The village was Pendruc, and the house was fantastic. The holiday season had just finished and the village was just about deserted. There was a beach about a quarter of a mile away with a small playground, no shop, but a telephone box. The house was well furnished and had the lot. Sue took no time to cook us a meal. And kept this up all the time we were in this area.
Sunday morning we all awoke early and the Kids and I set off to nearby Tregunc to buy breakfast. We found a patisserie by following other people walking our way holding sticks of bread. Robert boldly walked into the patisserie, went behind the counter and served himself the French bread sticks. He had no language barrier. The boulangerie up the road was a bit more of a challenge; we did eventually get some pate and cheese.
So back home, kids watching French cartoons on TV, we ate our Sunday breaky. It was a fair weather day so we made a beach day out of it. The beach near us was a small white sandy cove with light-coloured granite boulders on each side.
Of the coast in the distance we could see many sailing boats going to and from Concarneau. There were also Islands in the distance. We flew our kite, and Emily gave it freedom. It flew towards our house and got tangled in the power lines. The kite flew high up from the power lines the rest of the afternoon with the kids keeping a constant check on it.

On Monday we travelled into Corncarneau after a quick trip to Tregunc to buy stick bread (baguette) with the kids for breakfast. This time they held them at their sides and played trains up the footpath. We had coffee in a busy sidewalk I near the market. We had just shopped in the supermarket and it was very relaxing to sit and watch the world go by. The market had a variety of vegetables and garlic sausage meats. Across from the market was the entrance to the walled city of Concarneau. Inside were many restaurants and craft shops. We were very impressed with the colourful Quimper pottery. Then we walked along the battlements overlooking the very large fishing fleet in the harbour. There was an interesting fishing museum in an old chapel that showed stages in modern fishing boat design.

Across the bay from Concarneau is a small holiday beach. We had lunch there and as the lunchtime moved on more GB cars arrived and picnicked on the beach. Off the beach were lots of small craft and there always seemed to be someone getting on or off one of them, although no one was swimming, it was an active place. We walked along the beach, over granite boulders, to see what was around the point. Another point with people having a barbeque. Big fire in a ring of stones and fish cooking on a grill. It seemed a pretty laid-back area of France. I bought a detailed Michelin map of the area, so on Tuesday we decided to travel through the small villages south along the coast from us.

We passed through lots of very small rural villages, without shops, pubs, just a collection of houses and a phone box. Much like the one we were in ourselves. On the coast there were the older small villages with protected harbours, mostly protecting flash yachts. The country became hillier; we headed inland and came to a forest. The forest had small dirt roads through it, so we headed down one and found a sunny grassy spot. Out with the picnic blanket, rose, cheese French bread, nectarines and a rest on our backs in the sun afterwards. It was a pretty forest of birch and tall pine trees, streams and not a sole in sight.

Brittany forest picnic with cider.

North at the large city of Quimperle, we searched for a cider orchard. Only to find that we had gone to the wrong district. The place we thought was a cider place turned out to be a good family restaurant recommended by the Trebilco's. Still, we did enjoy the
cheap cider of the area. Especially the sweeter type. Back home Sue excelled herself with a good dinner.

Wednesday, we took to the motorway to get down to Morbilian.

This is a large inland delta with many islands. On the way, we stopped at the old town of Pont Aven. There was a stream running through the town and small metal water wheels attached to the houses that straddled the stream.

At Auray, we parked the car across the bridge from the old inland port of Auray. Cheese and bread in a small park with a sand pit in it, old men drinking dark bottles of wine, laughing at us, we were not too sure if the sandpit was a dog toilet, or kids to play in.

The walk through the old township with its brown Tudor-style houses leaning over the narrow streets, up the hill to the church that hadn't been restored and past other older houses that were away from the restaurants, looked well lived in, was like a walk without time. There was the old and new, both used for a purpose and not conflicting. The main town of Auray was high above the port with windy old streets leading up to it. The drive down to the centre of the Morbilian area was spectacular with the road passing high above villages down below nestled in the valleys of steep hills, mostly using the estuary as the

main way of getting there. The islands in the Morbihan go on forever. There are a few larger ones that have small villages on them. We drove along the waterways looking at the fish traps and across the islands with their villages. It was low tide and the mud flats went out for miles.

Beach at Pendruc House Brittany

Back through Auray, we headed to the sea to see the Tourist area of Baie de Quiberon. Along its long white beaches are rows and rows of very expensive hotels, guesthouses and restaurants the centre of the area is Carnac, with it huge boating marina with gold-plated yachts, wide boulevards and stretches of beautiful white sandy beaches. Palm trees lining the streets. We stopped for an ice- cream!

The next day it rained. In search of some Quimper pottery, we headed west to the city of Quimper. We parked in the old square outside the cathedral. A lot of the old buildings still existed. Lots of old rickety roofs and sidewalk cafes. We had a coffee and the kid's a coke. Sue noticed a swimwear shop across the square had a sale on swimsuits. And one her size too. A bargain. We found a shop that sold Quimper pottery. There was a huge selection, and bought a pretty butter plate with a knife. On the way out of Quimper, we found another small forest and had lunch under the trees with a bottle of cider this time. The view was across an estuary with chateaus on the other side. The hypermarket had everything. I wanted some lights for the car, and we finished up spending a lot of time looking through the gigantic complex.

We took the back roads to Concarneau; it too has an area of holiday flats and beaches. Back home Sue paraded her swimsuit at the beach. She even got it wet! A special meal that evening completed our last night in Brittany.

Friday morning at nine we left for the four hundred-kilometre drive to Paris.

Chapter Thirteen

Friday was a dull cloudy day.The agent was pleased with the state of the house, so we headed off to Paris. Our first stop was at Le Mans. It was lunchtime; most of the small shops were closed, although we found a patisserie that had a delicatessen attached to it. Le Mans is quite a large city; it seemed to take ages to get out of it. At the entrance to the toll motorway to Paris, we stopped at the roadside to have our lunch of French bread and cheese. The toll motorway didn't offer too much scenery, the country was flat and not particularly scenic.

The entrance to Paris was very sudden. We were in rural country then in minutes we were in the centre of St Germain. From there on it was full-on traffic all the way. After trying a few different hotels in the Boulogne area we found one by chance at Pointe de St. Cloud. It was a pleasant hotel and there was a vacant parking meter outside the front door. I parked the car there and didn't move it for three days. The room was small with a single bedroom added to it. All through our holidays, we had used a travel cot for Robert that we borrowed from the Garlicks. It was then that I realised that it was left behind at Pendruc.

Robert and Emily topped and tailed their stay in Paris. We walked around the area of Pte. de St. Cloud, window-shopping and in search of a launderette. The area we were in was on the West Side of Paris near to the Bois de Boulogne. It wasn't the flashiest part of Paris but had that Parisian feel. That evening I stayed in the room with the kids and Sue went down to a sidewalk for a bit of time to herself.

Side Walk Cafe Champs Elysees

Saturday morning we walked to the metro and took a train to the centre. We walked up one of the main roads from the metro and there ahead of us was the Eiffel Tower. Behind the Eiffel Tower is a park with fenced-off playgrounds. Emily and Robert were back in their element. The fences were a good idea; Paris does live up to its reputation to having more dogs pooh on footpaths than anywhere else. The Eiffel Tower is huge. We took a lift to the first level and walked around the balcony looking over Paris. At certain intervals, maps were pointing out buildings. It was fun to pick these famous buildings out on the skyline. From the Eiffel Tower, we walked across the bridge to the other side of the Seine. Along the tree-lined boulevard, past the decorative bridges, until we came to Place de la Concorde, with its fountains that spray the roads, and Egyptian needle that you can line up with the Arc de Triomphe some distance up the Champs Elysees. Pl. de la Concord has a large park between it and the Louvre. We walked through the park and watched the smartly dressed Parisian ladies promenade. At one of the garden restaurants we had lunch, and so did the pigeons with the kids feeding them. At the Louvre, I left Sue to go inside while we went back to the park. Robert found a new treat. Walking onto the grass and waiting for the uniformed man to blow a whistle at him to get off the grass. Emily hopped on a rocking horse and later told me a man kept shooing her away. He was the owner and wanted a fare. Back at the fountain, a man turned up with a hand trolley full of model sailing boats and

bamboo sticks. In no time the fountain was full of little boats sailing and kids pushing them back into the centre with their bamboo sticks

Robert at a fountain near Louvre Paris

Sue met us at the fountain and had been successful; she had seen the Mona Lisa. We walked up the famous Champs Elysees. It is one of the most beautiful city streets we saw on our trip. There was a material shop on the way. Sue bought some pretty material for Emily.

We sat in a crowded sidewalk Cafe, where all the chairs faced the street as if there was to be a show at any minute. We even had to wait for seats to become free. Service was quick!

The Arc de Triomphe is huge, also the toilets below it are well known to tourists. The walk back to the Seine, through the office area past many hairdressing salons, started to make us realise how far we had walked. We metro'd back to Pt. de St. Cloud. The supermarket was open, so we bought cider, cheese and bread and made our way back to the hotel for tea. Paris was a point in our travels when we realised that our money was running out. So the meals were simple and the entertainment cheap. We did sneak out that night for a drink and profiteroles at the Cafe that Sue visited the night before.

Sunday was also a beautiful sunny day. We took the metro to Place de la Cite. This was the island in the middle of the seine. The original Paris and also, Notre Dame. When we were outside the entrance to the metro we came upon a market full of caged birds.

Canaries, budgies, parrots all sorts of birds. At the Notre Dame cathedral, there were many sightseers we walked inside to see the

Mass. It was very dark inside and the cathedral was packed. Outside we stopped to look at a copper plaque in the cobbled square. This marked the centre of Paris. It is from this spot that all distances are measured. Even to Vanuatu, where French public service employees get a distance allowance Vanuatu and New Caledonia are the best available since it is one of the furthermost places from this plaque in Paris. On the left bank of the seine, we walked past the second-hand book vendors, to the metro. We came out near Montmartre and walked up the many steps to visit the white cathedral of Sacre Coeur. Nearby was the square of Montmartre. It was alive with artists, painting portraits, cutting out portrait silhouettes from paper; rows of self-styled paintings and artists displaying their talents. We had lunch in a Cafe watching life in this busy little square.

Back at the hotel, Sue decided that the washing had to be done. We found a launderette and watched the clothes tumble. It seems continuous, this search for either a launderette or toilets while on holiday. The greengrocer was open and we bought heaps of grapes and ate them while the washing tumbled.

Back at the hotel, I found the car's windscreen plastered in parking tickets. The meter said working days only. Saturday is a working day, for parking officers at least. I asked the clerk at the hotel what to do. He asked for the parking tickets and said he would talk to the mayor about it. Fine!

Sue and I again sneaked out for a drink in what was becoming our regular Cafe.

It took a while to get to sleep that night. Robert and Emily enjoyed the large windowsills of the hotel room and would sit hanging half out of the window and shout at the people passing by.

Although we did Paris on the cheap and walked for miles, we were pleased with what we saw in gay Paris.

Chapter Fourteen

Early Monday we packed the car joined the Parisian morning rush hour traffic, through the Bois de Boulogne and somehow found the exit road to the north. The country to the north of Paris is also flat. We drove steadily until we came to the old city of Amiens on the Somme. Bought some lunch and a little out of the city stopped on the side of the road to eat lunch watching the trucks zoom past us. The road had lots of shrines to past battles along its side. The Somme has been a battleground for centuries.

When we arrived in Flanders, (still in France) we were stuck behind a very long army convoy that travelled at a snail's pace. I had decided to take the A roads, not the Tollway to save some money and the A roads were mostly used by truckies and the army.

Across the border into Belgium, our first stop was a town called

Tournai. We were in the French-speaking part of Belgium and Tournai was in full swing. A carnival. We hoped to find a bank open so we could exchange some money. This proved a difficult task. We did find one and were the last customers of the day.
Back at the carnival Robert and Emily had gone on a Carrousel that had barrel organ music, and brightly painted horses. I had left the Volvo parked in a street that was used for marches while we were out looking for bureau de change and came back to find it the only car left in the street and one end of the street barricaded off. We drove away through back street laneways, feeling like we had made an escape.
North of Antwerpen we stopped at a roadside restaurant on the motorway. It was very flash and had a truckies area where we sat with the kids and had our first good meal for days. Hang the expense! The country was very flat and we seemed to go through miles of pine forests.
On the border between Holland and Belgium, I stopped the car and saw the customs to see if I could get a stamp in our passports. No way. Later that evening, we arrived at Roosendaal in North Braband, found a hotel and all of us crammed into a small upstairs room. Later Sue and I went downstairs for a coffee in the Bar.
There were tables with mats on them people playing cards and Dutch spoken all around. We certainly were in Holland. I took one of the newspapers on a stick and read the job applications. Sue and I went for a late stroll through the town. It was getting chilly and a late night stroll changed to a brisk walk back to the hotel.
The next morning we headed off to Zeeland. We saw windmills on the way. The land was dead flat and any available land was used for agriculture. At Middleburg the capital of Zeeland we stopped the car and walked through the square. The old town was full of very small low houses all in neat rows, canals and bridges. To one side of the square was the Radhaus with its ornate tower and red tiled roof with lots of small windows in it. Ice creams in the square. We drove out to the sea. Then along the dyke for some miles until we found the bridge, Zeelandbrug, that takes you out of Zeeland. The Road to Rotterdam crossed over islands that were mostly rural with no wasted space and held dry by huge, solid dykes. The waterways were busy with boats and a few pleasure craft. From Rotterdam we drove north to Utrecht and a bit further on to Laren.
Lauren is where I was born. It's a small town surrounded by forests and now has become a fashionable place for the well-to-do to live. Tante Rietje was home. She is my auntie and has lived in Laren all her life. Om Naardus, dad's brother had passed away a few years earlier so she was on her own and had enough space to put us up.
Her daughter Carla was also there to welcome us. I had not seen her

for ten years, It was nice to be back with family again and to show off my little family and wife, Sue. We went for a walk in the nearby forest called the Hij while Tante Reitje made tea. This was near where we used to live and a favourite playground for my older brothers and sister. That evening her son Ron came over and we caught up on what happened over the last ten years. He is about my age and would have been my closest cousin had we stayed in Holland.

Wednesday morning we went for a walk through the small town centre. The shops were mainly boutiques. Robert knocked a shelf over in one of them, so we window-shopped from then on. Sue did find a material shop and bought some bits and pieces. That afternoon we followed an ANWB route called Lek and Linde. It was a 140 Klm drive through small roads past canals old swing bridges, windmills, old farmhouses and various waterways. Ranging from the busy Amsterdam Rijn Canal with its endless stream of barges, to small canals between the paddocks full of ducks. The route offered all that you expect to see in Holland. We also passed through Tienhoven a small village on the side of a dyke where my grandfather was born. I was amazed at the amount of open spaces that Holland still has. Back in Laren, we bought an Indo-Chinese takeaway. Later that evening, Carla returned with her husband teenage son and daughter. We had a pleasant evening talking about the two Van Garderen families when we were both in Holland years before.

Thursday we headed inland to find the small township of Garderen. It took a while to find. It's a small town in one of the forest regions of Holland and is a popular holiday spot. We bought some spoons and glasses with our family's name on them. Also, photos of the town signposts and the windmill that once ground the wheat. On the way back to Laren we stopped at Huizen to see my Mum's sister and husband, Tante Ef and Om Jan. They don't speak English. Sue had a

communication problem but they did make us welcome. I stayed with them last time I was in Holland, but they were not well enough to have us this time. We didn't stay long. Rushed back to Tante Rietje and then off down the motorway to Den Haag. The miniature world of Madurodam is a wonderful experience. There are lots of models of famous Dutch buildings, Schiphol airport with jumbo's taxiing down the runways, motorways with cars and trucks zooming along. Trains going all over the place and the fire boat putting out a tanker on fire. I enjoyed the visit as much as Robert and Emily. In Den Haag, we stopped at a cafe for Ice creams and coffee. It was also nice to take Tante Reitje out with us. That evening, pancakes and a game of rumikub. It's a game of rummy played with tiles.

Friday we drove through the forest north of Laren to Naarden.
This is an old island town with its town walls built in the shape of a star. I had an uncle who lived there. The streets are small and the houses smaller. With a large church in the centre, with cannon balls stuck in its tower from the Spanish invasion. We walked into an old Krug, pub, and had coffee in this little Old World building.
That afternoon we went across to Hilversum to shop in the huge shopping complex. Hilversum is where Dad used to work in the Philips factory. Back in Laren, I took Sue and the Kids to see the house where I was born. It's a two-story brick house in a narrow windy street called Elbow Street. I was later told that I was born in a small back bedroom downstairs.
We said farewell to Tante Reitje early on Saturday morning, via Amsterdam, tunnelled under the harbour, popped out north of Amsterdam. We took the small roads to Volendam. Volendam is an old fishing village on the Ijseelmeer the old inland sea that gave access to Amsterdam. More than half of it has been reclaimed and is now pastures. Volendam still has much of its old charm with a traditional sailing barge, fishmongers, and people getting about in costumes. I

had a feast on smoked eel and bitter herrings. Emily and Robert were photographed in costume. We walked around the quay and took in the pleasant scenery. The sea was dead flat, out on the horizon were sails of all shapes. On the shore, the tiny shops huddled the waterfront selling all sorts of curios and clogs. Emily clopped away in a pair of them.

Robert's second birthday at Noortwolde

Along the dyke, then inland a little we came to the old town of Edam. Bought a cheese of course, and drove through the narrow brick streets. Just out of town, there was a windmill with its sails up, turning slowly in the morning breeze.

To get across to Friesland we had to cross the long Afsluitdijk It was a calm day; the North Sea lapped

quietly against the dyke. We stopped halfway across the dyke, climbed a lookout tower and could just make out each end of the dyke.

Noordwolde wasn't too hard to find and Den Boskamp is where the Van der Goots holiday house is. The house is small, living area downstairs and bedrooms upstairs in the loft of a steep roof. It had its little garden. There were about 40 of these in this compound. The compound also had a small fenced area with goats, deer, rabbits and a playground. Being later in the year the place was almost deserted.

Sunday morning with Robert in the pushchair we headed off to explore the town of Noordwolde. It is a small rural town, that sells clogs and has two chip shops. The chip shops in Holland sell various meat croquettes with their chips and cover it all with mayonnaise.

Also to my delight, they have a cool Heineken on tap. Near to Den Boskamp is a large recreational park that has a lake with a sandy beach, and cycle tracks through the surrounding forest. The kids swam in the cold water and I built sandcastles that Robert later enjoyed jumping on. We had certainly found a pleasant Dutch backwater to spend the next week.
Monday was the day! Robert's birthday. Yep! Robert turned two.
We drove down to a small town called Vleder where there was a launderette that had only one machine. The kids and I bought ice creams and walked through the quiet streets, while Sue kept an eye on the lonely washing machine.

Op de Fiets! Cycling aroung Noortwolde forest area

Back at the house Sue and I did the finishing touches to Roberts Car cake. We put up balloons outside on with party hats, and Robert did a fine job blowing out the two candles. Pass the parcel, running races and a grubby knees competition to finish of the afternoon. That night we had a takeaway frites and croquetjes.
On Tuesday we hired
pushbikes in town and armed with a local map took off on the small roads to discover the countryside by pedal power. Each bike was an old heavy-duty type with a seat behind. I had Emily and Sue, Robert. We peddled out of town singing away, Robert shouting at the passersby.
We peddled for about 20 km. Mostly through forests and past old farms with their fields bordered by small canals. We picnicked near an

old house, Den Esse, built on a mound surrounded by a moat. Dated 1622. It was surprisingly easy to ride the bikes and we were lucky that there wasn't any wind to peddle against. On the last few kilometres back Robert fell asleep against mum's back as she peddled.
The next day we headed north on the bikes. We passed through a few small villages and came to a track that followed a river. The Lindis River was about 50 metres wide and lined with reeds on both sides. We followed the track on the river edge for about 3 km.
There were no houses in sight, only cattle and the river fowl. It was as if we were miles from anywhere. We picnicked on the riverbank near some houseboats.
We returned to Noordwolde by heading towards the windmill that stood out miles away. It was another long day on the bikes, but a lot of fun at a snail's pace.
On Thursday we decided to take a trip on another ANWB route. This one was the Friese Meeren Route. That took us past the canals and waterways of Friesland.
it was a long drive, yet the variations in the villages and traffic on the canals and waterways were always interesting. We stopped to visit the tile and porcelain factory at Makkum. The brightly painted sailing barges on the tiles and the very expensive vases were kept as far away as possible from Roberts's inquisitive fingers. We did see some of the old villages that were once huddled on a slightly higher plot of ground. Church on the highest spot. Reminded us that a lot of the land we were travelling on was once underwater. I took a great interest in the different types of sailing barges that we came across and was surprised at the number of them in restored condition.
The next day it rained. We had been very lucky with the weather in Holland up till now. Fed up with being indoors, we decided to see Holland's largest pine forests. It was just those, miles and miles of rows of tall pine trees all in a row.

Emily not impressed with van Gough!

On Saturday we headed north to Leeuwarden the capital of Friesland. We have a friend who we met in Pt Vila who now lives there. They wished to see us that evening. So we detoured around Leeuwarden to look at the historic township of Marssum.
There was a castle with a moat, ornate buildings and churches. We walked through the castle grounds and back to the car as it was getting colder by the day. Van der Goot's parents live in Kollum about 40 km away. So we headed over to see them. On the way, we stopped at an old castle estate called Fogelsanghstate. It was open to the public and people were in the gardens taking wedding photographs. The stables housed lots of old carriages, but the thing that interested me was the horse-drawn sleigh. There were family-sized ones and sporty single-seaters that must have been used for races on the ice.
The Van der Goot's senior was pleased to see us and we had an afternoon chatting about Vanuatu. They had been out the previous year. Emily feasted on mounds of lollies. Her little friend in Pt Vila had said that Oma van der Goot always had jars of lollies and she was right. Back in Leeuwarden, we had dinner with Vera (who was a Dutch volunteer in Vanuatu) and Richard, met their new daughter and again caught up on what's what with whom. Richard worked in Amsterdam during the week and gave us hints on what to see in Amsterdam. We were to go there the next day.
We arrived early in Amsterdam found a park for the car and set off to walk through the city area. As it turned out we were very early as the daylight savings ended that night we were an hour ahead. The Dam is the square in the centre of Amsterdam. On the edge were Ole Bollen caravans. Smothered with icing sugar we gobbled them down seated on the bench watching the peculiar procession of people pass by.

We walked to the central railway station (signs on the toilet doors asking people not to take drugs while inside) and nearby boarded a canal cruise.

The cruise took us along the canals past historic houses, pointed out the various gabled roofs and passed under many pretty arched brick bridges.

We walked through the streets to the Rijksmuseum and followed the queue through the Van Gogh Museum. Amsterdam, with its canals and rows of narrow five-story buildings, and occasional tree-lined canals, was certainly a pretty place. But had a sinister element, with bombed-out people bouncing from wall to wall as they moved down the footpaths. Unbelievable graffiti painted on any available space almost gave you the fear that if you stood still long enough you too would be painted. It was as if people had stopped caring about their once-beautiful city.

We drove back to Den Boskamp for our last night. Packed early in the morning. Played down by the lake in Spokedam and headed south back to Laren.

On the way, we stopped at Urk. This was once an island and still is the home of Dutch fishing. There were still a few of the old Urk men

getting about in their black fisherman's costume. The harbour had various fishing boats in port and the whole area smelled of fish. We climbed the small hill and had lunch next to the lighthouse.

Dutch meal at Urk restaurant

We arrived at Tante Reitjes mid-afternoon. I went on to Huizen to see my mum's family. Tante Ef and I went to see an aunt that I had visited before. Poor old dear couldn't remember me but chatted on all the same. We then walked to see Mum's brother Om Jan Visser. He had just returned home from work and was determined to read the paper before chatting to me. So we patiently sat until he was ready. He was a harmless uncle, just had a routine I suppose. I had tea with Om Jan Kluiver and Tante Ef, and talked about our family and what we were doing in the Pacific. He was genuinely interested and I managed to help him empty his bottle of Gin. He died a couple of months later.

Back at Tante Reitje's her whole family had come to the party for our last night in Holland. It was a fun evening and had a good family ring about it.

We left early the next morning to catch the ferry back to the UK from The Hoek of Holland.

It had been a busy, but very pleasant two weeks in Holland. I enjoyed having had a good look at the countryside of Holland and seeing again the town where I was born.

The ferry slowly moved out of the waterways of Rotterdam and we left Holland behind. Kids spent the whole trip in the playpen of the ferry. Sue struck it rich on the pokies, so a meal of pommie fish and chips was assured for that night.

Chapter Fifteen

It didn't take too long for us to disembark from the ferry. However, the line of cars going through the customs went very slowly, ahead of us were two kombi vans with haggling kiwis trying to persuade the

customs guys they were only poor travellers.
It was very dark by the time we left the wharf. We headed off into the moonlit countryside and a couple of hours later we stopped in a small town Earles Colne on the way to Cambridge. There we found
a pub that put us up for the night and I phoned the Garlicks to announce our arrival back in England.
We stopped in Cambridge to have a look around although it was a rainy dull day. The drive past the colleges and their gardens was pretty and the famous small garden-lined river that flows through the colleges, the river banks that have seen countless amorous students demonstrate their romantic interludes. The Volvo's problem with a leaky water pump was becoming very serious. I tried to find an agent with a spare that I could fit. No luck. The familiar "sori no gat" from Vanuatu rang true here also. Eventually, we arrived in Milton Keynes, dropped the kids off at the early learning centre (you don't forget old tricks) and window-shopped. Found a present for Stu's birthday.
It was nice to see the Garlicks again and we were made very welcome. The spare bedroom became our home for most of the two weeks we had remaining in England. The next couple of days we stayed close to Winslow, I repaired the car and a trip to Lloyds bank emptied our remaining cash. So like it or not we were coming to the end of our trip.
Dave and Marge babysat the kids and Sue and I went out to the pictures It was great, big screen, good film (Hope and Glory) That weekend we rugged up again and drove past the locks on the Grand Union Canal to have an enjoyable stroll through the Stokegrove forest. The Garlicks were into 40th birthdays, so we snuggled up to the TV. And house sat. Stu and I glued his model fighter plane and hung it up in his bedroom to protect him while he slept. The next day Dave and I polished the car and it looked very smart indeed.
Monday we drove to the nearest railway station and boarded the train to London. It was our first time in London together. First, we went to Thai Airlines and changed our tickets to the new departure date. The trips on the underground tube didn't go down too well with Robert and Sue and Emily kept me busy trying to find loo's.

Trafalgar Square London

London is a good city to walk around in and we had a sunny day, so we walked down the streets playing a live-sized game of Monopoly. At Trafalgar Square, we boarded a sightseeing bus sat on top where there is no
roof and for the next hour were guided through and past many of the famous spots. From Trafalgar Square, we walked through Admiralty Arch and into St James Park. Squirrels scuttle up the trees and Robert and Emily chase the ducks back into the pond. We stared through the gates of Buckingham Palace and a nice policeman showed us where we should have crossed the road. The trip back on the train was in the commuters going home period. It was a long squashed trip.

Tuesday is market day in Buckingham. So off to the market, we went. Barclays Bank kindly gave us some money on our expired Visa card by mistake. The ladies hunted for bargains and I just pushed Robert about in his pushchair. Both of us trying to unwrap sticky lollies that a kind old gentleman sold in the market. He must have wrapped them in his youth to secure his retirement.

Back to London on the train the next day. It was wet rainy and much like that the whole day.

We tubed to Harrods walked through the departments played with the toys in the toy department and gazed at all the variety in the decorative food hall. Near the houses of Parliament, we boarded a boat trip up the Thames to the London Tower. At the quay are sold very hot mustardy hot dogs that will warm any frozen body and it did

the trick for me. All six passengers boarded the open-sided ferry for the coldest river trip ever. We did enjoy the glimpses through the rain. At the London tower, we disembarked and walked around the tower. From the tower we made a quick dash to St Paul's, only to find that it was a lot further ahead than we thought. A detour to a warm McDonald's pleased the kids no end.
St Paul's was a comforting stop in the rain. Sue and Robert stayed down below and Emily and I climbed up the steps to the whispering gallery. We whispered to each other along the wall and peered over to the edge to see Sue and Robert way down below.
It was a wet day in London but we were pleased to see and do all that we did.
That evening Dave and I met Bob Lee in the Bell. Had a pint or two of the good stuff and Bob came to the Garlicks for a meal and stayed the night. We were unable to make it to the Isle of Wight to see the rest of the Lees and were pleased that Bob could come up to Winslow to see us.
Thursday was auction day at Northampton. It took a long time before our car came up to be auctioned. It didn't meet the reserve price. I returned home 10 pounds poorer, ready to try again next Tuesday.
We left early Friday morning; thankful that the car wasn't sold now we could drive up north to see the Teskeys instead of changing trains. Just before Nonhampton, the radiator burst a pipe. We slowly drove to the nearest garage where it received a good quick patch-up job. We motorwayed north and stopped at one of the service centres on the way. It was one of the first built and looked it too.
It didn't take long to find Graham and Mary's house in Cleckheaton. We waited for them to arrive home from work. It didn't seem long since the last time we were there, but that was more than two months ago. Catherine Wright was staying the weekend with the Teskeys also. She was studying at a boarding school in Manchester. Her parents are now living in Fiji. The ladies and kids had fish and chips (Bradford is the home of fish and chips) while Graham and I set off to the Friday night ritual of indoor soccer. Graham has been a regular player for many weeks even playing with his arm in plaster. The game was gruelling and even taken very seriously by some of the players. Afterwards, the game was analysed in the Black Bull. Graham's teammates were from different parts of the district and only met on Fridays to play. But they had managed to get a free weekend from the wives and had a campout in the hills north of Bradford. That night in the Bull all the gory details were told.
Saturday was a shop day in Cleckheaton, and later to Bradford to watch a stunt flier's film in the IMAX theatre. The screen is three stories high and gives you the effect that you are there. Sue found

some bits for her sewing machine. We had looked for these bits in a few countries by now. Back at the Teskeys Graham took us on a walk to the field near his house and showed us a few soccer tricks with the ball. Catherine skateboarded down the road to show us how it was done, and Graham and I showed everyone else how to skate, in a fashion. That evening we had a card and rumikub night around the kitchen table.

Up early on Sunday and down the road to a park. It had a small hilly forest next to it with an abandoned railway going through. We walked the tracks to a strange old house on the top of the hill then back to the pond to watch radio-controlled boats battle for supremacy of the pond. Lunch at the pub, a bit of sunshine too.

Graham and Mary drove Catherine back to Manchester while we had a quiet afternoon at home.

We were very pleased that we could go north again to see the Teskeys. We were sorry to say farewell, as we knew that it might take some time before we could share so much time again.

The trip back down to Winslow was a wet sightless trip broken only by the whines from the back seat.

We had a night out with the Garlicks at the Thatched Inn. Traditional English meal good beer and a very pleasant night.

Tuesday was our last day. The amount of stuff we had to pack into our suitcases was just too much. We trimmed it down to about 50 kgs over the allowed weight.

The Volvo was polished to perfection and off I went to the night auction at Northampton. It went through the hammer at about 7:00 that evening for 1350 pounds. I was very pleased. Dave had chosen a beauty. Very little trouble, 10,000 miles later and 150 pounds less than I paid for it. Volvos are great! Dave picked me up at the auction and we had a few good beers on the way home.

The last night at the Garlicks was special. We had a fine time there and were very pleased that we could stay the last couple of weeks with them.

Early Wednesday morning we piled all the suitcases into Dave's car said farewell to Marge and the kids set off in the dark to Heathrow to start a long long journey home. Dave had been a great help in making our holiday come together with a great friendship that always will be remembered. At Heathrow, we said farewell and got absorbed in the stream of passengers. The overweight baggage was kindly overlooked and before we knew it, England disappeared beneath the clouds.

Chapter Sixteen

Facts and Figures

Pound Sterling = $1.80 U.S.

Airfares $4,520.00

Car $2,700.00
Cottages $2,160.00
Spending money $7,200.00
Total $USD 16,480.00
Volvo 1981 244DL Sedan Sold with 135,000 Miles $2,400.00
We travelled just under 10,000 Miles
Left Pt. Vila 30 May 1987
Arrived Back Pt. Vila 24 October 1987
Sue and John turned 32 On the Trip
Emily was 4
Robert turned 2 On the Trip

Return to Port Vila

We stopped in Singapore for about 16 hours on the way back. We booked into a hotel near the airport, closed the curtains, and placed Robert in a collapsed cot! It scared the sleep out of him!

Finally, the VG's slept and slept a bit more. Back at Changi airport we found a McDonald's and fed up on junk before boarding the airplane to Melbourne.

Cory met us at the airport. We stayed at their place for a few days. Mum was over from Tassie. It was a close time. We talked about Dad, the funeral, and how all were coping. It was nice to have some time with Mum. She enjoyed Emily and Robert's company.

Robert could converse with his Oma, and Emily filled her in on everything Oma should know about our trip.

We were getting anxious and excited as we approached Vila. Flying over the familiar Mele Bay, Mele Island, and finally, touch down on Vila tarmac. Our European journey had ended.

We moved into the Saville's house. Bill and his family had just left for their 6 weeks tour of Europe. So it was straight back to work and into the familiar Island lifestyle of Vila. The wet season was on its way, so unfamiliar humidity took its toll on us for the first few weeks. The Saville's house had a huge swimming pool. We lived in that. So did our friends, we had a popular visit for a dip.

Emily went back to Linda Dwyers Kindy and Robert started at a small playgroup. Social skills seem to be Sue's new task with the kids. It was a bit more difficult to settle back in. We were living in someone else's house and much of our stuff remained in boxes in the basement at work. Murray Ball, a New Zealand programmer was living in the Tasarriki house, so when the Saville's returned we had to find a house to rent.

We found a nice place down on the first lagoon. This lagoon was about 6 kilometres long and about half a kilometre wide. It was the lagoon that we looked over from Tassariki. Houses on one side and mangrove trees lined the opposite side. We lived on the bottom end of the lagoon. There was a small river about 100 meters long, which connected this lagoon to a much larger inland lagoon.

We were in a small group of houses like a small suburb of Vila. Our house had a large flat backyard that bordered the lagoon. The lagoon was tidal, so there was about a meter drop between high and low tide. We bought a sailing dinghy that could easily take the four of us and kept that moored outside our place. The lagoon was a very pleasant place to sail, as the winds were gentle. There was a small Island inside the lagoon not far from our place. You could walk to it or sail around to a small sandy bay on the island. The kids called it the secret beach and enjoyed the sail to it. They would walk home and I would walk

the boat back on the low tide.
Christmas parties increased for the kids, now there was Robert's playgroup one as well so Santa gave out gifts a few times that year.
I put on the Santa suit and was taken in the back of a truck to kindy to give out gifts from a big sack. One little boy stayed very close in front of me and stared intently at me. He was trying to figure out who Santa was. It was his present that came last out of the bag. Ho Ho Ho.
We had a Santa party for the kids and Ni Vanuatu from work at Bill's house. It went well, and they enjoyed a swim and a lot of food. Nice to have the Ni Vanuatu kids and mums there, as shy as they were. We had a Ni Vanuatu Santa.

Lagoon House Back yard

For Christmas, we met with several families at a new resort.
It was Irrikiki Resort on an island in the middle of Vila's harbour. This used to be the British High Commissioner's Island. It still had gardens on it a reasonably steep hill to climb up and a great view of the harbour. Christmas dinner at a resort around a pool was a relaxed way to finish the year.
The Webb's now shared a small house out at Banana Bay. This was about 20 minutes. drive past the Iriwhiti lagoon, where we had rented the Obelix hut, before the cyclone. Banana Bay was a small sheltered bay with about half a dozen small holiday houses, owned mainly by Australian businessmen. The beach at high tide was a pleasant place to swim, but at low tide, the coral shelf was exposed for about 100 meters to the sea. At the sea, it dropped off to about 10 meters deep,

to the seabed. Years ago, when I first lived in Vila, I scuba-dived through the caves that are at the bottom of this drop-off.
A Dutchman, who was a Mason, died. His funeral was the first Masonic funeral I had been to. It was full of Masonic rituals, and many words were said about him. Jock Hannaford was the leader of the Masons then, and he was quite distressed. I wondered then how well masonry prepared you for death. It also had a big impact on me. I didn't have a lot to do with this man, but I started to face the death of my father. I had not been at his funeral and this funeral at times became my dad's funeral for me.
I went to Auckland for three weeks in April. I stayed in a motel at Herne Bay and went into the city to NCR for a training session on a new style of NCR computer. Dale Kelly was the instructor, and I got on well with him. It was nice to be back in a work environment with a bunch of NCR guys. I also met up with Murray Ball from Vila, who was passing through. Auckland was an exciting city to be in. I went sailing in the harbour on a large tourist yacht. And walked for hours. On a good day, I would walk back to the motel at Herne Bay. About an hour's walk. There were several New Zealand technicians staying at the motel doing various courses. The evenings were warm, so I would sleep with the slide window open. I woke up in the morning to find my room had been searched. My wallet, which was on the bedside table, was missing, and my stuff was strewn on the floor. I was told that motel theft was very common in Auckland. I changed my mind about Auckland after that. I kept my window closed and hid my passport and ticket home.
One guy was from Christchurch. Peter. He had driven his Landrover up and was going to drive home non-stop. So I came back to Christchurch with him. We left at 4:00 on Friday afternoon and got into Christchurch at midnight on Saturday. I stayed with Dirk and Gonny and left for Vila on Monday.
I had just arrived home, when I was asked to go up to Honiara, to repair a bank computer. I decided to take Sue and the kids up to see the place. It was over a weekend, we stayed in the Mendana Hotel, it was a nice breakaway, as Sue and the kids had not left Vila since we returned from Europe. Honiara on a weekend is closed. The Mendana Hotel is in the centre of town, but on the bayside and has a pretty sandy beach. Next door is the yacht club. On the beach, in front of the yacht club is the landing place for the 20ft long fibreglass canoes that come over from the Florida Islands about 10 km out to sea. It's a busy beach with lots of people arriving and departing in their canoes, pigs, woven bags of produce and kids. The sunset from the Mendana Hotel is quite pretty. It sets far out to sea and highlights the Florida Islands like long, floating strings of beads, adrift on the sea.

The situation with PacTec in the Solomon Islands had changed with no one left to manage the business. David Hicks who had lived there for some time was on leave and wanted me to swap with him, so he could live in Vanuatu for a time. We were considering this, as it was a career move for me and a new place to live, it was time to move on, but we were not ready to head south to New Zealand.
Tension between Pango village and Fila Islanders, both villages close to Vila had heightened. The problem stemmed from ownership of dirt that was taken from Pango and used as fill somewhere else by Fila islanders. This caused a lot of upset, as the protocol was not followed. (Underlying grievances come to the surface in times like these). There was a lot of gossip and nervous talk amongst the locals about the mass slaughter that was about to take place. This weekend the waterfront was being set up for a carnival with food stalls made out of bamboo partially erected. The Fila Islanders came to town. (Fila Island is in the south of Vila harbour. They always considered custom ownership of all of Pt Vila. Pango is a village on land nearby, and of course, also claims custom ownership of all of Pt. Vila.) On Monday 16 May '88, they picked up pieces of bamboo and started smashing windows of the shops and looting cigarettes and beer. They took over the town and threatened to move on to the Pango village to settle the score. Sue had parked her car behind shops right in the centre of the riot earlier that morning. Her car had a side window smashed. She had gone out to Mele Beach with Emily and Robert to a kid's birthday party early afternoon before the riot began. The police cordoned off each end of the main street and left the Fila Islanders to it. Evening and drinking calmed them down. The next morning the VMF and police regained possession of the town centre. Storm shutters went up on all the buildings except the French Chemist. He was sure the fuss was over. The Fila Islanders returned in the evening to their island to regroup. Their leader was Baruk Sope.
Rumour had it, that they were to take over the town the next day. The next day many people came into town to watch the event. The VMF drove trucks up and down the main street and people started to get very excited. Noise would flare up at one end of town and hordes of people would run to see what was going on. At one time a few VMF landrovers were parked at the seafront in the town and people rushed to see why they were there and shouted at them. They panicked and drove away with speed, running over a poor simpleton, a francophone Ni Vanuatu that always danced as he walked through the main street. He was well known. He was dancing behind the landrovers with the excitement of the crowd and didn't move away in time as the VMF fled away.
The Fila Islanders didn't come off their Island and peace was restored

through lack of interest and nightfall of the second day.
On the afternoon of the rioting and looting, I drove out to Mele Beach in the van to pick up Sue and the kids, as well as other kids from town. The road was closed by the Mele Village, who thought their village might be attacked. Rumour had run mad amongst the Ni Vanuatu. We drove past the roadblock, slowly. They looked into the van, but let us go on. We were well known to them anyway, having lived near Mele for three years. At the Birthday party, we filled the van up with kids and told them to sit on the floor in the back. I was worried about being pelted by stones. We drove through the back roads, avoiding the town centre to drop off the kids. Some parents weren't even aware of the riots.
The shutters remain on the shop windows for the next 2 days. The French Chemist, lit up his store, defiant that he was not to be touched, and it wasn't.
During the riots, I too went down to see what was happening.

Our doctor Bott who birthed Rob and Emily

People would rush to see what was happening, faces full of fear and excitement. Then screams and a stampede in the opposite direction as the rioters would group to scare off the police. Police ran back to the police station. Then all would creep back again to watch the rioters and the same thing would happen again. I think all were out for a bit of a thrill. The Fila islanders were well known, and it was like a family squabble with many broken windows. Just a sad pity that the

simpleton was killed by accident.

We decided to take the move to Honiara more seriously. People we knew, thought we were mad, as most had lived in PNG and then moved south for safety and a better lifestyle. Honiara was considered just a bit better than PNG and Vila a paradise. We agreed to go and started the paper chase to get approval to reside and work in the Solomon Islands.
In June the Hicks family from Honiara moved into Vila and into our house. We moved back into the PacTec flats above work and I built a crate to take our stuff away. July 2 was our departure date.
We had a big “Go Finis” party in our old house just before we left it. We invited everyone we knew and had
Roy Ernst the local chef cater for it. (I had known him from my first time in Vila). He provided bar staff and enjoyed the drinks. He turned up quite merry with the food and joined in with the party.
We travelled around the Island and stopped at Takara Resort again, swam in the thermal pools and felt it was time to move on. Sue's car was sold and it became

Emily's Birthday party Lagoon house

another taxi. A day trip from Vila to Havana Harbour on the Coongoola Sailing ship was a highlight, although the weather was too rough to put up the sails. At Havana Harbour, we anchored at a lonely sheltered bay and barbeque on the beach. It was an ideal way to farewell the Mele Bay, Devil Point area, as we sailed past these to and from Havana Harbour.

The Webbs put on a farewell party at Banana Bay and a box of Champagne. We left in good spirits, even if we were told we were heading the wrong way. South, or Southwest, seemed to be the better option for many.

Vila had been our home for the past six and half years; we arrived with the view of staying possibly two years. Now we were a family with 2 children, having lived as part of a community, varied as it was in Vila. Arriving in Vila as newlyweds, and now having life experiences as husband and wife we were learning the mystery of marriage. The change in our lives as our children entered our world challenged our ideals of married life. The fear of bringing up children eventually settled into the routine of the rhythm of life. We adapted our shared journey to a family journey, learning life's skills from friends we made in Vila and from our family on the odd visits. All along there was the overseeing providence of God, we on the perimeter looking in; the unseen hand, holding us in His palm.

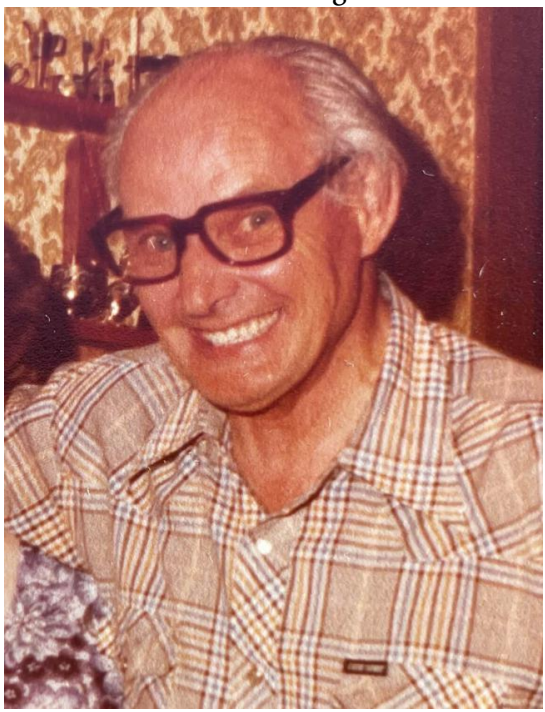
My Dad

My Dad, Neelis Van Garderen was bom in Eemnes, Utrecht in Holland on the 21“ March 1923.

He left school on the 20"' March 1937, and commenced work two days later as an office boy in a firm manufacturing handles and knobs.

His father was a builder and at an early age, he learned some carpentry skills.

In May 1940 Holland was invaded and later he was forced to go to Germany and build air raid shelters. He escaped and returned to Holland and was in hiding until the end of the war.



After the war had finished, he worked in a factory at Laren. He was working on the railways when he got married on the 17" of July 1945. He then worked at the Philips electronic factory in Hilversum building telephone amplifiers on an assembly line.

In the next 10 years, they had four children.

The following is a record of Dad's employment about his problem with his back. It tells of his varied employment and the development of his back injury.

They came to Australia in 1956 and settled in Ulverstone. The Titan Paint factory employed him for 3 years, then to Pipers Tru-Line furniture factory for 3 years.

He started with De Jong and Sons of Ulverstone as a carpenter in 1962. While pouring concrete from wheelbarrows he fell off scaffolding, with his wheelbarrow, into a building foundation. From

1962 to 65 he worked for his brother Marinus van Garderen. He was a builder. In 1965 he worked for Matthews before returning to work for his brother. In 1965 He was working for his brother in a nursing home in Wynyard and had 3 attacks of back pain over 8 weeks. In 1968 he was working for J.A. Buitenhuis and Ulverstone Builder
and hurt his back while lifting floor joists. In November 1973 he fell off a ladder while painting for Miles Painting Service and damaged his tailbone. After 11 days he went back to work. In July 1974 he worked for L.H.S. construction on the Don College in Devonport and was replacing scaffold planks. He lifted a plank and collapsed, was paralysed and taken by stretcher to hospital. After rest and physiotherapy, he recovered. In June 1977 he was working for Burline Constructions at the Montello Primary School and jarred his back while stepping off scaffolding After seeing the Specialist for backs, In July he received a certificate to state that he would have a recurrence if he continued the same occupation. He had his back operated on in March 1978. After that time he was advised only to do light work. He was unable to find work; He had a stroke in mid-May 1981, and was placed on an invalid pension.
He was 54 at the date of his accident and did not gain employment from then onwards.
Dad enjoyed hobbies and would take an interest in them with a passion. In Holland, he had tropical fish, built his aquarium and equipment and bred tropical fish. He was part of an amateur theatrical group in Holland and performed in local plays. He enjoyed photography and with his box brownie took 128 films and developed his own photos. Later he got into Super 8 movie films. He joined many 5-minute films together to make his family feature films, featuring, "The Family". He was a keen organist and played vertical music called Klaviskribo. We always had an organ in the house. Old peddle organs and later a Hammond electronic organ. He had a keen interest in electronics and built his own amplifiers (valve type) and loudspeaker boxes. A keen short-wave listener and builder of aerials for good reception. However, his long-term hobby was rebuilding the houses we lived in. This seemed to be his perpetual hobby.
My Dad was not a leader of men, nor would he stand out in a crowd. He would prefer to be a background person, willing to help others and somehow get things done in his way. He was a religious man, but not pious. He was never prominent in his church, (although he was the church organist for many years). He was quite liberal in his church life and not severe on us children.
He was a family man and preferred to be home, rather than in the company of other men. He was absolutely in love with Mum and openly showed his affection to her, whether we were home or not.

He didn't drink much alcohol, and at Christmas work parties, he was a target. After 2 beers, he was well on the way. He smoked for years and didn't put on much weight.
He loved saltwater fishing, off breaking walls or from rocks. I spent many hours fishing with my Dad, at many places along the North West Coast of Tasmania.
He also promoted independence in his sons and was reluctant to give advice. (Although I was not an easy young man to advise.) I didn't have a deep conversation with my Dad, yet I knew he was there, and without saying, had a deep care for me.
I saw him, full of laughter, and full of tears, I saw him passionate with my Mum, and in utter loneliness without her. I saw and felt his temper, his wild, cold, blue-eyed stare and also his grieving at the loss of his family as they passed away, in that far away Holland.
In his sixties, Dad had several strokes and would tire easily. He died peacefully in his sleep next to mum, who didn't know until morning, at home in June 1987.
I knew my father as a man, with ordinary human traits, whose strength was in his openness.

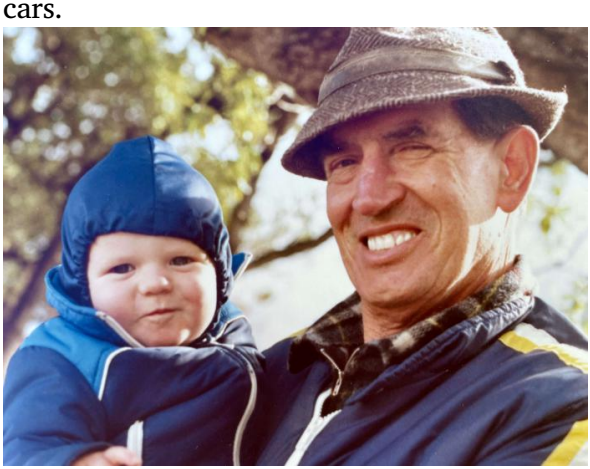
Sue's Dad

Alan Robert Agnew, Sue's Dad was born on the 22 of August 1926. Alan's dad (Robert Taylor Agnew) was a Dairy Factory Manager in the South West area of Ashburton. On the Canterbury Plains. Alan's Mum (Olive Phaup) and Dad lived in a local area called Blackbridge, close to a small rural town, Eiffelton. This is where Alan first went to school, and then they moved closer to Ashburton where Alan went to Tinwald School and then Allenton Technical School. (Ashburton). A teacher that Alan respected was E.S. Chambers, who taught him at Allenton School. Later Alan went to the Technical High School in Ashburton. His most influential teacher there was Mr. DDA Bird.

Alan worked as a parcel delivery boy, and then later took up employment for his uncle, Tom Phaup who owned a sock factory in Ashburton.

Alan left home just before his 18" birthday to join the Air Force in Blenheim as a cadet engineer or pilot. He had the option to stay in the Air Force or work for Manpower. (This was a job placement bureau during wartime and after the war, essential industries) The cheese was essential for Britain. He went to Southland, where he worked at the Menzies Ferry Dairy Company in 1944. He became a tall man and got the nickname, Lofty. On a visit home to Ashburton, he fell off his pushbike and was hospitalised for a month with a concussion. He returned to Southland to work in cheese factories for a few months after that.

He moved to Wellington where he worked as a Tin Smith, Wharfie, pressing women's stocking and other jobs. The days after the war were days of jobs a plenty, with evenings out at dances, the pictures, and cars.



Alan changed to working at Textile Mills. There were Mills in many parts of the North and South Islands. He worked at Korma Mills (In Auckland) for a couple of years then moved to Christchurch, to work

at the Lane Walker Rudkin Mills in Sydenham. Alan had an aptitude for mechanics and worked as a machine mechanic.
While living in Auckland, he met His wife (Sue's Mum), Eileen Merle Wells, at an Orange Dance (18/10/49) they were Married on 4/2/1950 at St. Matthews Church in Auckland.
They shifted down to Christchurch, where as mentioned earlier, Alan got a job at LWR. Their first home was a babysitter at 248 Lichfield Street. They moved into a flat at 65 Southampton Street in Sydenham. Their first house was at 23 Colombo Street, Beckenham, in December 1958. With a full family, they moved to 38 Riverview Street in 1966.
Kay and Sue were born while they were living in the Southampton Street flat, and the twins Julie and Ian while living in the Colombo Street house.
Alan's love of cars and his mechanic's ability changed his career to a motor mechanic. He worked at a Europa Garage in Northlands (Christchurch) He later became self-employed with his garage/ workshop in Colombo Street in 1963 and stayed self-employed until 1974. He still repaired cars for clients after hours and still does.
Alan's cars were: first car a 1929 Triumph 7, then an Austin 12/4 1928. A Ford 10, then his enthusiast car, a Jowett Javelin 1951. The family car became a Wolseley 6/90. Later the Super Minx, Fiats and Peugoet 504s became his toys and took up his spare time as well.
I met Alan soon after Sue and I were married, on our way to Vanuatu (via New Zealand.) Ian was still living at home (5 Clearbrook Street.) in a sleep-out behind the garage.
Sue's Mum had died in July 1970, and Alan looked after the 4 kids (Although Sue and Kay were at an age where they could leave home. And they did, Julie went flatting at an early age.)
Alan is a strong-willed man and decided not to smoke one day and never did after that. Also with drinking alcohol, did the same. He was greatly influenced by Dale Carnegie and mastered self-hypnosis. Disciplined to exactly 12 pieces of chocolate a day!
Alan was brought up a Methodist and had great admiration for his Mother's Mother and his mother's sister Auntie Jessie. Alan has always felt at ease with older people. (At 15, his girlfriend was some years older than him.) He also enjoyed hearing items of family history from these people and other relatives. Alan has a rich knowledge of dates, events, and physical features that are special to his family. Some gems of knowledge were passed on in sayings;
“For, ifs and buts were pots and pans, there’d be no need of Tinkers.”
“For many a slip, b’twixt the cup and the lip.”
He also has an interest in people he has met during his life and keeps contact where he can. He loves the country and goes on tours through the South and North Island, dropping in to see people he knows.

Meandering along roads forgotten by most, without the aid of a road map. Toolbox in the boot with some choice spare bits and pieces, never a doubt that his car wouldn't get there.

6 Clearbrook Street, Christchurch

During my early visits to New Zealand, with Sue, I met several relatives from both Alan's and Merle's side. Sue Mum. Merle Wells, family goes back to the first settler ships to Auckland. A story goes, that when the family walked through Auckland out to settle beyond, they came across a mob of Maori who wanted to relieve them of their possessions. An uncle wriggled his ears at
them! The mob was so astounded by this, that they left them alone and moved on.

An ulcer has troubled Alan, for many years on his ankle. It's an open wound that hasn't healed for many, many years. He is well adapted to it, but it needs much attention. This ulcer has taught him values and a worldview, that is a product of life experiences (He calls a university of hard knocks), with sayings and lessons from grandmother and Auntie Jessie, (and numerous others) that make him a special man.

He calls himself a Tither, and does just that, a tenth of his earnings goes to causes he sees as needy. It's his way of reconciling with the IRD and contributing to those who he feels he can help.

Solomon Islands

We arrived at Honiara, at the start of a week-long festival. It was the 10" anniversary of the Solomon Islands gaining independence. The week was full of events, cumulating into a grand finale on Saturday. Honiara was at its tidiest, and buildings were painted in the national colours, flags flying from every pole.

Bob Fisher (German Australian from Noumea), had been in Honiara looking after Pactec since David Hicks had left to work in Vila. He and his family left a couple of days after we arrived.

We moved straight into the Pactec House on Tavio Ridge and made it homely with what bits we had brought with us. (Most of our stuff was on the sea.) In Honiara, the best place to live is on one of the ridges that rise steeply from the narrow coastal plain that the city of Honiara is built on. These ridges, about 100 meters high, put you into the coastal breezes and above the mosquitoes and humidity at sea level. There are several ridges, behind Honiara; behind the ridges, the land goes even further up into jungle mountain ranges. The Pactec house was small, yet it had a large balcony the length of the house, covered and about 3 meters deep. The view from the balcony was exquisite. We looked over the coastline, out to sea, onto the Florida Islands. The sunsets over these Islands give the most beautiful colours. (When it is dry!)

Emily started school a few days after we arrived. She went to Woodford International School. It was a primary school of about 200 children. It had an Australian Headmaster. Emily's teacher was a Solomon Island lady, Emily was one of about 6 white children in her brown class. The school day started with singing the Solomon's Island national anthem. Emily fitted in quickly and made friends easily. She got on well with her teacher, and Sue joined the drop-off and pick-up school kids parade. It was a nice way for her to meet other expats. We were new, but we were familiar and at home with this lifestyle.

Honiara, became the capital of the Solomon Islands, after World War Two. Before that it was jungle. The old British capital was on a small Island called Tulagi, just off the shores of the Florida Islands.

Guadalcanal is the name of the large Island where Honiara is situated. It is to the right of Port Moresby PNG and not far from the equator.

Further north than any part of Australia. The climate is 6 months of wet season, and then six months of dry. The dry season is hot, but pleasant, with reasonable humidity.

Honiara has a population of about 40,000 people, approx 2000 expatriates. The Solomon's had been under British rule for some time, and is a backwater of the Pacific. Many projects have been started in the Solomons to encourage Industry, commerce, and a sustainable economy, but most of these failed. It seemed that the British left a

legacy of discontent when they gave Solomon's independence.
Honiara looked tired and dusty, even when it was spruced up for its festival. However, it's a place where you make the best of the situation you are in. There were several Australian, Kiwi, and British expats on government contracts, supporting development projects. Also a small group of Dutch managing various aid schemes. The Americans had a Peace Corps, and a Met station, dubbed the CIA in the Solomons. Development projects, in forestry, Palm oil, WHO malaria control, rural water supplies, gold mining, fishing, and finance, employed most of the short-term expats. The longer-term ex-pats were in commerce, tourism and whatever turned over a dollar.
The Solomon's is divided into 5 regions and each region has its own Premier. The people from each region are distinctly different. The people from the Western Province were black, with slim features and narrow noses. While the people from Malaita were light brown and had wide noses. Honiara is the big draw card for young people from the provinces to find work and excitement. The Won Tok system in the Solomon's is the social welfare system. What this means is that you cannot refuse to accommodate family from your village if they come to Honiara to stay. Some employed people could be looking after a household of many. Fringe dwellers, or shanty villages were tucked away alongside many rivers and streams near to Honiara. Each shanty village would belong to a province or an Island within a province. The Solomon Islands seemed to be a group of Small Island nations tolerating each other to form an Island group nation. Historically, there are deep divisions between these people. Honiara is a relatively neutral territory in that Guadalcanal was sparsely populated before WW2; custom land ownership was minimal. However, the few Guadalcanal people contest claims to custom ownership of Honiara.
The majority of the people living and working in Honiara were Malaitans from Malaita, the nearest large island. These people were more enterprising, than other nationals and quick to learn skills.
They also pride themselves in being Malaitans and are close Wan Tok's.
The Saturday of the 10" anniversary festival had a full programme. We went downtown to watch the parades and followed the crowd to a large park. We saw lots of custom dancing and met a few people from Emily's school. We met the family Liversy who we knew from Vila. They invited us to a party at their place. We were in again socially.
Jim and Mary Livesey made us very welcome; he worked for Solomon Telecom as a British trainer. He was a keen Morris dancer and I was to start dancing that week. He was also head of the Masonic Lodge, so I started again there too.
We found a car for Sue, our stuff arrived and we settled into the

PacTec house.
My work situation in Honiara was busier than in Vila. Pactec in Honiara had been short-staffed for some time, awaiting a new manager. My job was to keep the technical side of the business going and to get the new manager into the Pactec way of things. A young couple from Perth had been employed, Mark and Tricia Edwards. Mark had owned a record shop in Perth, and Tricia's first baby was due in July. They decided to stay in Perth until both baby and mother were well enough to travel. A consultant in Sydney had employed them. The Edwards finally did arrive in September. They shifted into the Pactec house and we moved into a house on a ridge on the other side of town Panatina Ridge.
The Edwards stay in Honiara was a disaster. Tricia "and baby boy, did not adjust to the climate. They went back to Perth fearing meningitis but would return after Christmas. Mark had business skills but he felt he had made the wrong choice soon after his arrival. He left before Christmas.
During this time, I was managing and keeping the technical side afloat. Honiara had several reasonable-sized computers in Banks and government offices. We also had several offset
printing machines and photocopiers. PCs were just starting to become popular, and also we had many typewriters. The supply of consumables for these was also a substantial part of our business. It was a good business and did well. The local staff were mainly Malaitans, three office girls, a cleaner and three technicians. They were all reasonably competent in their jobs and had been working there for some time. The Pactec Office was behind the main centre and within walking distance of most computer sites. We had our financial system and ran accounts and general ledger as a bureau.
I enjoyed the management side and also selling the products. We had 3 bank accounts at different banks and ran the business on overdrafts. Whenever the accounts built up, I would transfer money to John Nixon's offshore accounts. There was always a shuffle between bank overdrafts, and transferring monies overseas. A certain amount had to be transferred to Vila each month to pay my salary and later Bob's too. I was also constantly holding off creditors and chasing debtors to keep the cash flow available to run the Honiara business. Doing these financials outside of the overseas transfers, became an art of not allowing others in our organisation to know how financial we were, so they wouldn't take our operations money, as I called it. The other area was importing. This meant going to the shipping offices, checking incoming ships ' manifestos, if there was freight, picking up the "bill of lading", and arranging a bank transfer to pay for the products first, so I could get an original invoice. (The banks held onto these original

invoices, so they would be paid before goods were picked up from the wharf). With these documents, I would then go to customs and pay the duty, then go to the wharf and pay wharf fees and finally get the goods into our office. Anybody in importing had a good knowledge of what ships were on the way when they would arrive and news of ships freighting offloads at PNG or Singapore en route would cause many phones to ring as the bad news was passed on.

We rarely dealt in airfreight. Ordering products from overseas to arrive on time also took some amount of skill. I had done some of this work before in Vila, but not to this extent. It was a fast learning curve.

After Christmas, Bob Fisher decided to return to Honiara with his family for two years. He was happy that I was up there as now there would be two computer engineers. I was to manage, sell, and also keep the computers going with Bob.

We had split our salary; I was paid the bulk of it directly into Vila (Tax-free) and took a salary that we could live on in Honiara. This way, we could save what was being deposited in Vila, and we did!

The house we were now living in was closer to Emily's school, on a ridge, looking out to sea. The house was concrete and about 2 meters above ground. It was reasonably furnished, and larger than the Pactec house. There was a large balcony on the front of the house that was shaded by big trees. The yard had some large shady trees and was surrounded by a 3-meter fence with barbwire on the top. This type of fencing was common around expat houses. We would lock the large gates at night. We got to know people in the nearby neighbourhood and found it a pleasant place to live. The house came with a dog from the previous Australian ANZ bank people. It was a skinny; spotty white dog called Shilling.

Birthday Party at Panatina ridge

I started going to the Masonic lodge in Honiara. This was an old lodge, started in the late 1800s by an Anglican priest. This was in the days when the capital was Tulagi. The walls were full of portraits of past Masters. Jim Livesey was the current Master. The evening went much the same way as the Vila lodge. Most of the masons were British. The Solomon Islands politicians did not have a good view of Masonry, and soon after I started, the Lodge closed. The Lodge was accused of conspiring to the financial ruin of the Solomon Islands and controlling the economy. We did have some British financial advisors as

lodge members, but as to a greater calling to be the financial gnomes of Honiara, we were far short in skill or desire.

I also became a Morris Man. Jim Livesey encouraged me to join. I learned the shuffling, and three steps of the Morris order. We practised our dances every Monday night, on the concrete patio of the Chief

Justice house. He would phone on a Monday afternoon to make sure you were coming along, how could you refuse the CJ?

Chief Justice Morrismen Honiara

The Morris men were a group of about 10, mostly British, me and a yank. We had a musicians group of about 4, Banjo, flute, accordion, and guitar. The music was all old English Folk. Our dances were traditional Cotswold dances. It did take some skill to learn, most of the dancers were over 40 + and needed the beers in between the dances.

Some evenings would be a Ladies' night, our wives would turn up and we all would take turns dancing. The CJ's house was a great place to entertain. A good group of guys, also a young English, single lady, who was a solicitor, came to dance. She was splendid and could jump about and dance some of the most difficult solo dances. When we performed, she was our star attraction. After all, a performance of overweight old men hitting each other with sticks needs the livening up of a fit young lady dancing the ancient exotic movements.
We went on a tour to Boula, the capital of an Island, Santa Isabel.
The National Custom Dance Festival was on, and we were guest dancers. We sailed across on an inter-island trader ship, Baruku. It left Honiara in the evening and arrived early the next morning. We slept on the roof of the ship on stretchers we bought along, the vibrations of the engine putting us to sleep.
Boula, is a small town, the government centre of the Santa Isabel province. It has a church, school, and some solid buildings and

thatched village houses. A government depot and a few small expat houses for volunteers. The 8 of us, camped into one of the houses. The Nationals were very hospitable, fed us custom food, and excited about the dance festival. People from many regions also arrived on our boat and others that came that day. The dancing started at midday. We performed late afternoon, and our young lady did her thing. It was a hoot to all the locals. They thought it was great to see white men, dance with bells on their ankles and flowers in their hats. It was their custom too! Later that evening, there was a local feast, many speeches, and some beautiful choir singing. The next day, more dancing, so we did our bit again, too. We left that evening going home on the Baruku. About 5 minutes out in the harbour, thud! We steamed up onto the sand bar and there we stayed until high tide at 4 am the next morning. Canoes came out to meet us, and soon after we were stranded, took the people off, as if it was a normal occurrence. However, we stayed and moved back onto the roof for a few drinks of Scotch and to sleep on the now still roof. So here we were stuck on the sand bar at Boula! The Morris Men on tour would be home late for Tea!

We also met Graham Teskey's friends, Chris and Kathy Radford and their two children. They had lived in Fiji as British volunteers, with Graham, and had been in Honiara a year or so when we arrived. Chris was a town planner, and trying out his skills in Honiara. He also brewed his own beer and needed people to drink it, so he could reuse the bottles. It was a challenge but could be done. They lived on the far side of town, in an old house on the beach. They were very hospitable people, and a bit disorganised. We would be invited for dinner, turn up and only then Kathy would know about us coming.

We had our first Christmas at their place; Chris was a likable character. We even managed to get them to come over to Vulelua Island Resort one weekend. Chris liked the sushi on the menu.

John and Velma Mason lived at the back of Honiara. John a Brit and Velma his Philipino wife and boys, lived a simple life with dogs, chooks and neighbours kids. John was keeping up the water supply to Honiara. He wrote a novel while he was there and sent it to various publishers. He was to become the Harold Robins of the Pacific. He spent months on his book; publishers were slow to respond to his manuscript. I haven't seen it in print yet. John's dog had puppies. So Robert got his dog. His puppy was a brown, shorthaired dog. He called it David. So now we had a watchdog team of Shilling and David to protect us. Unfortunately, they both left our compound at night and joined in at the dog disco further up the hill all night, barking away madly, only to come home in the morning to sleep all day. However, Robert had a David dog, and Emily had Shilling.

We had to walk up a concrete stairway to get to the door of our house. At the bottom of the stairway was a chilli bush. It grew well in the dry patch of ground and produced lots of shiny red chillis. Emily knew about chillis from Vila. Robert was told about them and that they were hot, but it was too tempting. One day, he picked one and ate it. It made him very hot and sore. He was angry and hurt.

After calming down, he picked up his wooden sword attacked the chilli bush and destroyed it. He was only 3, but could dish out revenge!

We met Russell and Heather Abrams, who had two kids similar ages to ours. Sue had met Heather at school pick-up. They were a Kiwi family, who were on their second time around in Honiara.

Russell worked for WHO bringing drinking water to the villages. He went all over the provinces and knew the Solomons well. They lived a few streets away from us. We soon became very good friends; Russell and Heather were from Christchurch.

Entertaining, either by a dinner at night or a bar-be-que midday was a popular event. Most weekends we socialised. Later I got back into scuba diving again, diving off beaches. This was nice in that the ladies and kids could picnic and swim, while we went for a beach dive. Also, gossip was a good topic of conversation. It was more of a bush telegraph to find out whom and what was what.

Rob and Emily with Daren and Jemma Abrams

Honiara did have restaurants, Chinese or Hotels. There was a nice French restaurant, La Perouse on the outskirts of town. It was an old

converted colonial house with a lovely garden, on the seashore. The food was good too, but priced for special events only.
The Chinese food varied and could give you a sore belly in the morning. The drinking water in Honiara needed to be boiled first, so you never really knew the state of the water in a Chinese restaurant. Halfway through our stay, a hot bread shop opened. This was wonderful. There was a bakery of sorts, as sliced bread was imported from Australia, and frozen. Now you could get a fresh cream bun, with artificial cream!
Honiara Amateur Theatrical Society was the cultural event. Every few months there would be a play at the local HATS theatre. The actors were expat thespians. The plays varied from Shakespeare to humorous slapstick. They were always well-attended and a lot of fun. Wine and cheese were served at intermission. It gave some local expats notoriety for a few weeks.
We arrived during the dry season, Honiara, doesn't have a beach, except for a small sandy spot in front of the yacht club and the Hotel Mendana. There are two beaches, Benegi 1 and 2, about 20 miles out of town to the west and another 20 miles further on a resort with a black sand beach, Tambia Village. The drive to Tambia took us through various villages. One village has tree houses, which people live in. We swam at these beaches quite a bit, the water was warm and coral reefs just off the beaches were full of small colourful fish. In Honiara, the Mendana Hotel had a swimming pool that we could use. The Mendana pool always had someone you knew swimming there, so it was a nice, after-school place to meet Sue and the kids for a drink.
My work started at 7:30 and finished at 4:00 in the afternoon, with an hour for lunch. School went from 7:30 to 1:30. So the afternoons were mostly free from mid-afternoon onwards.
Honiara had a riot. It all started at the market. Somebody wrote on the wall that Malaitan's bums were blacker than the bottom of cooking pots. The blame was put on their rivals, the boys from Belona, who lived on the other side of Honiara. There was a lot of talk of Maliatans going out to White River where the Belona people live and massacre them. The Belgians came into town and beat up some Malaitans. Both sides held their ground. Then a large group of Maliatians headed off the White River. The police stopped them before they got to the Belona barricade. Then they charged back through town smashing windows, and looting. The police eventually got control and closed off the town centre. Machine gun posts at each end. This all happened during a working day. I didn't realise the police had a riot squad. There was a curfew in town that night. The next day there was fighting at the Matanika Bridge. I saw tear gas canisters being used. These people took their rioting seriously. It ended with a huge

compensation claim by the Malaitans. They assembled in the sports stadium and demanded the Government pay them millions in compensation for what was written on the market wall. In the end, they settled for $200,000 and peace was restored.
The Belona people got nothing, and in the end, it was found out that some Maliatan boys had written the message on the market wall.
They were having a go at one of the market ladies. Honiara is a melting pot of grievances that stay just below the surface. Imperial cartographers, who grouped a bunch of islands, declared the Solomon's Group a nation. The people on these islands have traditional enemies who stir the blood, and at times awake the ancient warrior spirit. Also, an underlying spiritual dimension that rules their lives, deeply.
Sue and the kids returned to Christchurch for three weeks During November/ December. The wet season had started. I had to stay back in Honiara. I built a rocking horse for the kids and saw a lot of Russell and Heather.
While Sue was in Christchurch, she bought a trampoline and had it shipped to Honiara. She took the kids to the Canterbury show and spent most of her time with family and friends in Christchurch.
They came back in time for a very Dutch St Nicholas party. The number of Dutch consultants on the Netherlands aid scheme had grown. A full set of costumes arrived from Holland. The Dutch Burger and two Black Peters were at the wharf awaiting the arrival of St Nick on a small Island trader. Many locals were there and lots of expat kids. The Black Peters were Dutch people in Green costumes of the 16" century with stockings and faces painted black. They were holding sacks, and scaring the kids, then giving them lollies from Holland. You could see the puzzled look on the local people's faces. Why would a white man paint himself black and wear a curly-haired black wig? St Nick arrived in full red costume; he looked like a Bishop! The Burger read out a long welcome to him in Dutch. (They were Dutchmen, and Dutch is the only authentic language of this day.) This puzzled the locals even more. Hoping to get what was in the Black Peters sacks, they crowded the little wharf excitedly. St Nick and the Burger, Black Peter all pilled into the back of a Ute, waved goodbye and drove away out of sight. Everyone was left staring at each other wondering what it was all about, holding a Dutch lolly.

Saint Nick's Day Honiara Wharf

One Dutch lady we knew was a doctor. She had a heart for her work and ran the leprosy aid scheme. She would go into the outer islands and into the villages to find the lepers. The villages mainly hid these people, as they were a disgrace to the village. Some villages denied they had lepers, but she somehow found them. She would give medicines and leave a regular
supply for some relatives to administer daily. Then she would do the circuit again after a few months and check-up. It was disheartening for her to find that in most cases the medicine was not administered regularly, due to lack of concern or some other excuse. It was really hard to help these leper people. She worked almost to exhaustion. Later I saw a TV program in New Zealand and she remained in the Solomons to continue this work. In my eyes, she was a heroine in the leprosy relief to the Solomon Islands.

The year was coming to a close; Sue and I had been married for nearly seven years. This year had been a year of change and adaptability. We had outlived our time in Vila; farewell good friends and started a new life in a new country. Old ties with Vila were still there, but our home had firmly shifted to Honiara. We made new friends and familiarised ourselves with a new country and its lifestyle. The children were at the age when everything was interesting and days flowed into each other. Little friends are made and the past is soon forgotten. For Sue and I, we knew we were avoiding the decision to return to the "real world" as we used to call it, Let's put it off until we had a bit more

saved, and done a bit more. I was absorbed in my work, and enjoyed my family times, I was moving towards being a provider, building a career, and moving down the path of becoming a long-term expatriate. The climate, and our health, left us tired; at times our reason for being in Honiara became cloudy.

In our bedroom, I had set up the amateur radio station. I was now H44JG. There were only four active Hams in the Solomons. We had an award called four from 44. This meant that an overseas Ham had to contact 4 stations in the Solomon's, and then we would send out a certificate, and award to them. This was a coveted award to get, as to contact all four of us over some time, was difficult. As soon as I put my call sign on the air, I would get stacks of people replying to make contact. Many Americans would want to get through. They all knew of Guadalcanal, and I had some interesting conversations with old war veterans, who still knew the place quite well. Late at night, if it was hot and I couldn't sleep, I would get on the air, and chat away to various countries, as the noises of the tropical night came in through our window. Sue didn't mind and listened in until she fell asleep, then I would sit in the semi-darkness and put on my headphones. It was a retreat into another world, staring into the lit-up front panel of my radio, with a microphone in my hand.

Our first wet season brought many storms and heavy downpours but no great winds. The humidity never disappeared. The strong sweet smell of vegetation, when the sun came out, after a downpour, filled the air and life returned to moving around in a steam bath.

Emily, especially found the wet hard. She stayed pale and had sunken, tired eyes. Her blonde hair would go fizzy. Robert got heat rashes. It was also easy to catch the flu that some expats had brought back. Everything green grew at a great rate, and so did the population of mosquitoes. At dusk, it was impossible to sit outside. The end of the day was spent under ceiling fans waiting for the darkness to clear away the mosquitoes.

There was a large market area in Honiara that had some permanent buildings that housed, butcher shops, which sold fresh meat and chicken early in the day There were some fish shops, but most of the produce was sold from woven mats on the ground. The market would start early in the day, with mostly women, sitting in front of their woven mats in rows. There is a pecking order of who gets what position, in order of what Island, then village they come from, and other, hard to understand, reasons. People would pick out and pay for what they wanted. Most items were priced and battering for the best price was not common. You just walked past all the ladies and picked the best or cheapest one. Beetle Nut, looks like a hard green plumb. It is sold in bunches of about 20 beetle nuts. These are chewed raw, with

a small handful of lime. When the lime and Beetle nut are mixed in the mouth with the saliva, it forms a deep red juice. The market ladies chew on this all morning. After half an hour chewing they spit the stuff out and start again. The problem is, they don't look where they spit and if you are walking past you'll get a dob of red pulp sprayed on your legs. This put a lot of the expat women off buying produce at the market. The beetle nut is supposed to keep you calm and pleasant. In the afternoons when the marketplace was cleared, council cleaners moved in in an attempt to clean the place.

It is littered with produce leaves and red patches on the ground everywhere from the beetle nut. Solomon Islanders do not drink Kava, but they are partial to beer. Warm beer. I have not tried beetle nut. It is said that if an expat chews beetle nut, he is definitely tropo.

Bob Fisher, his lady, June and two young children. Linda and David arrived early in the year. They shifted into the PacTec house and used the Pactec Landcruiser. Bob wanted to marry his lady in Vila on the way up, but the law in Vila is that you must declare your intention to marry for 2 weeks on the notice board on the Town Hall before you can be lawfully married. They did get married later on in Honiara.

Bob and June, (a younger Thai lady) his two kids, Sue and I, and a friend from the yacht club, turned up at the Honiara Town Hall. It was Thursday, the day marriages were held. We waited in line, people in front of us and people behind us. lt was a busy day. We walked inside and a thin Scottish man said hello and then started reading the marriage rites, he was so fast and with his monotone Scottish accent, not a word was understood. He stopped, held his pen towards, Bob, June and me (best man) then we signed! That was it. We went back to Bob's place and had dinner with the seven of us, and Bob was now married, again. I met Bob in Noumea when I first worked in the Islands and met him years before that in Sydney when he worked for NCR. He was the manager of NCR Wollongong.

Bob and I got on well, the morning coffees at the Hotel Mendana, at 10 became a regular habit, and it was nice to work with someone who could help out again. Later we employed another expat, Kath Green who was a programmer; a Scott married to an Aussie. By the end of the year, we had 3 expats and 12 Nationals. One National, John, we sponsored, sent down to NZ to study for a certificate in engineering. It was a political move to show we wanted to eventually have Nationals running the business. John did have the ability.

Stephen, a National who had worked for us for some time, came from Tikapea. This is a tiny Island to the South East of the Solomons. The people there are large and look Polynesian. The boat goes there every 3-4 weeks, and at times misses out Tikapea till the next round. Stephen was not allowed to have more than two weeks off. I relented

and let him go. As expected, the return boat didn't arrive at Tikapea and we didn't see Stephen for 6 weeks. He enjoyed his holiday and worked well in appreciation for his extra holiday pay. The Malaitans, at work, started to scheme their next year's holiday plans. A lesson learn t in management, but I did favour Stephen, he was a likable character.

Emily's birthday soon came around. We had a party at our place, played fishing plastic fish out of a bucket and lots of other games. Emily had a band of new set of friends. Robert had started Kindergarten, at Emily's school, and then attended a kindy in Chinatown.

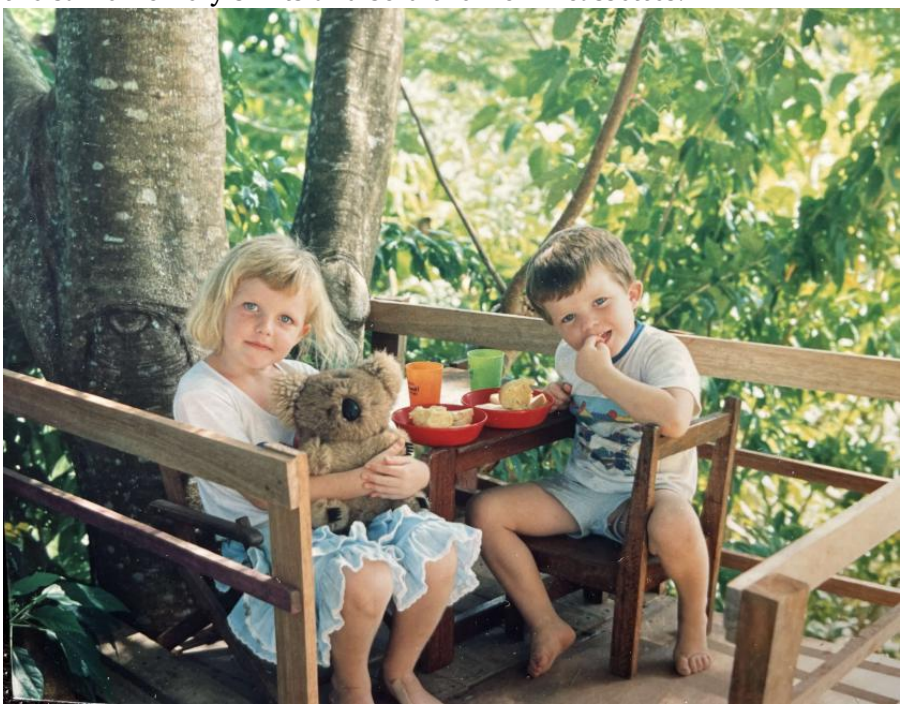
We built a tree house in a large tree about 10 ft away from our front patio. The tree house was about 10 feet off the ground and had a ladder going up to it. We made a flying fox from the patio to the tree house and sent food and drink to the tree house, on demand. The trampoline from New Zealand arrived and we set that up below the patio. Kids called it the jumpoline. It was a popular trampoline for the other kids. Some parents weren't too keen; as broken arms happen around trampolines. We only saw lots of bruises. Toughen kids up! It also acted as a shade and kids would play under it on the sand. Robert would excavate with his trucks. Shilling and David would sleep under it.

At the bottom of our ridge, was a small shed, which became a Store when the door opened. They sold tin fish, rice, matches and chewing gum. Emily was now big enough to walk down the road to the chewing gum shop to buy her gum. Opening times for this little store were baffling to both Emily and us.

The Solomon Islanders had an interesting way of playing their island string band music. The string band music was much the same as in Vanuatu, repetitive, with a constant beat, but the instruments were different. Many bands had a bass that was a wooden box with a broom handle on top of it. A piece of string was pulled tight between the edge of the box and the top of the broom handle. This would be plucked and the note varied by the tension applied to the string, by pulling on the broom handle. Pan flutes were popular. These were about 10 small hollow pieces of bamboo woven together, next to each other, each piece slightly shorter than the one next to it, so by moving your mouth along this you could make low to high notes.

The bass rhythm could also be made from big hollow pieces of bamboo, about the diameter of a small person's head. Six of these would be lashed together, each piece a different length. A jandal or thong would hit the hollow ends of these, and a lovely deep hollow sound would come out. There were always acoustic guitars and nasal singers. The rhythm was easy to follow; it was nice background music

at restaurants. String bands were made up of young teenage boys, sometimes they would dress in native costume, the good ones, wore the same flowery shirts and sold their own cassettes.



Kids Tree hut Panatina Ridge house

I had started sailing again, as a crew with an elder English engineer who was responsible for the roads. (A thankless job, just when a road's potholes were filled in, another torrential rain would come and new holes appeared next to the fixed ones!) Point Cruz Yacht Club was in the middle of town, next to the Mendana Hotel. We would sail out into the Iron Bottom Sound, as Honiara
did not have a harbour. It could get very rough, and it was a test to sailing to get back to the club. My skipper took sailing a lot more seriously than me. Every week, without fail, he would stare at me, and ask how heavy I was! The boats we sailed were called Corsairs, they were about 18 ft long, with a jib, main, spinnaker and the crew went out on the trapeze. We tipped it a few times; I flew into the main while swinging about on the trapeze and tipped the thing over. I had a lot of fun, and the yacht club was social for the family, with hamburgers and chips, and a small beach in front to swim in.

After Christmas, the big event was the Beer Can boat derby. We built a boat of sorts out of beer cans, soft drink cans and foam. Mary Liversey and I and her son raced it. It was called Swallows and Amazons. There were about 20 boats on the beach at the yacht club. On a signal, the boats were picked up from the beach, and rowed out to a buoy about

200 meters away and first back on the beach won. The problem was on the way back; people dressed as pirates would try to sink your boat and pelt flour at you. Our boat fell to bits, and we swam the last 70 meters back to shore, throwing cans at the pirates. At the end of the race, broken boats, and hundreds of cans floated out to sea on the outgoing tide. Also, with crews being mostly English and Australian / Kiwi there was much debate as to who won, and whether the pirates were fair!

Port Cruz yacht Club beer can regatta Honiara

My holidays came in early May. We decided to go to Australia, spend some time on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, across to Alice and then a few days on the Gold Coast.

We arrived at the Honiara airport at 8:00 to catch the flight to Brisbane. Bags checked in, then wait, we waited until midday, and our morning flight had not arrived. We were told it would be about 6 that night. So

we went back to the Hotel Mendana, swam in the pool and waited the day away. This was typical, international flights had departure times, but it was better to think of it sometime that day.

Sometimes, the flight would arrive early and leave early, so being there 2 hours beforehand was essential, even if you might be there all day!

We stayed for a few nights at Alexander Headlands in a modern apartment near the beach. There was a large indoor pool; a pizza place not far down the street and Macdonald's nearby. TV

commercials were a novelty, and checking out the tourist spots was a lot of fun. We spent a day at the Big Pineapple, took train rides and walked through the farmyard. Robert and Emily patted kangaroos.
We flew onto Alice, Robert was not well, and it looked like he had chicken pox. Janet and Gerard's kids were spotty when we left! We had a couple of weeks in Alice, going bush to water holes, and just enjoying the outback. Janet and Gerard's house was big enough for us all. We used to put beer bottles in the freezer part of the fridge to cool them. After a few beers, we would forget that they were there, and they would explode in the freezer overnight, making a good mess. We did this several times. It was nice being in the Alice with the kids the age they are now. We could go for walks and to places that were a bit more off the beaten track. When we flew out of Alice, the eighties were near an end, it felt like the end of an era. We wondered when we would be back again.
We returned to Brisbane and stayed in a motel near the Storey Bridge. We visited Cynthia (Sue's bride's maid) who Sue used to flat with in Brisbane and her kids and husband Russell. They lived not far from the hotel. Brisbane was also an exciting city to visit with our kids. Shopping Malls, and some beautiful, old parks. We walked over the Storey Bridge and also visited Sue's old friend, Kay who was now retired and lived in a large house with boarders.
We found an apartment on the beachfront at Surfers Paradise. The sea was cool, although Emily and Robert managed a swim, and play in the beach sand. Not many bikini bunnies at that time of the year.
Arne Haneke and Arnie were living on their trimaran, which was moored on a jetty just north of Southport, on a river that ran into the Broadwater. We didn't sail for some reason; maybe next visit?
However, they had made a nice home onboard. It was tied up at a marina, which had full facilities, it was their floating home. Haneke made us macaroni on board, a few drinks, beautiful sunset from the boat. The birds flew up the river close to the water; it was a peaceful spot.
Newby was Dreamworld Fun Park. We stayed all day. Took most rides, saw the IMAX cinema, ate lots and Emily and Robert held a Koala. It's a great way to get children tired! Sue had her birthday on the Coast. We all went out to a restaurant.
We bought an above-ground swimming pool. One meter high and 4 meters in diameter, with a pump and all the bits and pieces.
The pool went up quickly in our yard back in Honiara and was well-used. Sue and I would take a dip later in the afternoon before the mosquitoes arrived. Now I had a new job, cleaning leaves out of the pool and keeping the water clear with chlorine.
Russell and Heather knew of a swimming spot behind Honiara.

We drove over the hills and then down a steep slope, then parked the cars about a kilometre away from the Lunga River. The river flowed through a gorge. At one time this road was built as the river was to be dammed and a small hydro power station to be built, but that never happened. It was great to swim in freshwater. The river was about 60 metres wide. We would swim across to small caves on the opposite bank, then float down the river and make our way back to the other side to the river bank we had started from, and then walk back up the river to our picnic spot. A few people knew the spot, so to pick one of the few shady trees near the riverside was the key to a pleasant afternoon.

On the way to this swimming spot, on a hill overlooking Honiara and Henderson Airport is a war memorial. These are white concrete pillars, put up by the Japanese. From the memorial, you look out over Iron Bottom Sound, where so many battleships and submarines were sunk, both Japanese and Allied. It was on this hill near here that Japanese artillery guns fired relentlessly onto the airstrip just a few kilometres below. (You could see people walking at the airstrip.) Between the memorial and airstrip was the Lunga River with its underground hospital dug into the bank of the airstrip side. On the other side of the river, the land rose to Bloody Ridge, this ridge is just before the memorial where so many Japanese died. The Japanese built the first airstrip at Henderson, and then the Americans captured it and extended it, under the fire of the Japanese from the hill we were standing on. The Americans would cross the Lunga River and attack the Japanese, then retreat to the airstrip. The next river past the Lunga was the Mataniko, a smaller river that flows next to the city part of Honiara. When the Americans crossed this river, fierce battles raged in what is now the centre of town. There are metal memorial markers along the main road that runs from the Mataniko River bridge to the other side of town, with inscriptions of battalions and how far they had advanced against the Japanese. Some 40,000 men died in these land and sea battles in 1941 and 1942, around Honiara.

Bits of war machinery, aeroplanes, troop carriers, and guns, are on display at various private war museums. Kids at school trade GI dog tags that they still find, in old foxholes and trenches. Bullet cartridge shells can be found in backyards. I found a few of them in our backyard, as we were on a ridge that would have been defended by the Japanese. Old, live ammunition is dug up daily. At Emily's school, the kids were assembled at the sports ground to see some army guys explode old live grenades at one end of the field. It was a real lesson in that these grenades are dangerous. Expat boys used to trade with found grenades, too.

Past the airport, out towards the sea is a place called Devil's Point. It is

where the army explodes the ammunition that is found. We lived about 10 km away from this place, some days the windows would rattle from the blasts. A big problem with tourists and especially scuba divers was, collecting souvenir ammunition from dive wrecks and other sites. They would hide these in their luggage and fly back to Honiara from the outer islands. There were signs up in airports forbidding this, as these things could go off if disturbed. For some reason, people thought that if they were old, they were duds. The kid's display at school and our rattling windows showed otherwise.

L*ast days at Panatina Ridge*

Russell and Heather were keen scuba divers. They had been diving for years off the south island of New Zealand and dived in the Solomon's. I hadn't dived for about 2 years. Russell took me down to about 40 ft, I used Heather's gear
and got the taste for diving again. The Solomon's is superb for dives. I took another course with the local dive shop and got my ticket this time. I bought some second-hand gear and dived with Russell and Heather. The water is warm and visibility could be 100 ft or more in places. We dived on war shipwrecks just off the beaches, submarines and aircraft, all in about 30 ft to 120 ft of water. The shipwrecks were well-coated with coral and had most of the valuable metals taken from them. These wrecks were now the home of hundreds of fish of all sizes. The Sub lay broken in half and quite a bit of it was recognisable. The plane sat on the sandy seabed as if it was meant to land there. We dived from the beach, Sue and the kids would swim and snorkel over

the coral reefs nearby and we would dive further out to sea. Emily did well snorkelling and would paddle about looking at the fish and talking to me through her snorkel. We had many pleasant afternoons as a group on the beaches, mainly Benegi 1 and 2. These had the most accessible shipwrecks. I cut my foot badly on a broken bottle just offshore; even here we had to be careful where we put our feet. The other worry was stonefish. They lived in the sandy seabed and had spikes on the top of them that were poisonous enough to paralyse you. I didn't ever see anyone stand on one. I saw lots of turtles, and various types of fish, but rarely saw a shark. I only saw small reef sharks. One time I was diving with Heather on a wreck in about 70 ft of water. The water was so clear; it was the closest sensation to flying I ever experienced. There were well-known diving spots off the other islands of the Solomon's. One I wanted to get to, was the Wall, and Central Station in the Western Province. This was the Mecca for divers, Russell and Heather's favourites. Maybe one day.

During August, I had to go down to Noumea, to present the sales and operation figures for PacTec Honiara. Sue and the kids came as far as Vila and stayed in the flats above PacTec. I spent 3 days in Noumea. There were 6 of us at the management meeting. Dale Kelly (The NCR training instructor from Auckland) now works for John Nixon, running a software house in Auckland. Mrs. Nixon baked us a meal that evening; John poured out good French wine. The next day we went out to the Lighthouse on his Launch. We fished, and I swan in what was now cooler water. It was a good management meeting and I started to feel part of the management team and felt that a new career had begun. We had a successful year in Honiara and the best growth rate. The budget I prepared for the next year had a good target and was achievable.

Back in Vila, Sue and the kids caught up with the Webbs and others. I came back from Noumea to stay with them. It was pleasant to visit, but we felt like that, visitors. Life continued, after we left Vila and people, places and events belonged to those who lived through them. We now lived our own lifestyle, in Honiara and knew that Vila had moved on. Returning to Alice, was to go back to the days before we were married, going back to Vila after a year's absence, was returning to our beginnings as husband and wife, mother and father. It was nice to be there again, a special, familiar place, but it was no longer home.

Things got very busy at work during the following months. I had bouts of blood poisoning from infected cuts and felt weak. The doctor, an English woman, told me in no uncertain terms, that it would be the end of me if I did not slow down. She told me to remember I had a loving wife and two kids. I had thrown myself into my work and became short-tempered. The wet season started and with that the

heaviness of humidity.
We decided to go away to a resort on the western end of Guadalcanal. It was a small house on the island of Tevanipupu in the middle of the Marou Sound. An older English retired couple lived next to it and took care of the house. On the other side of the island, two men were building a small exclusive resort. It was half-built when we were there. To get there we flew in a small six-seater plane. We walked to the end of the airstrip and piled our stuff into a long, narrow fibreglass canoe. The canoe trip out to the Island took about an hour. The Sound was large and many small islands in it. We passed over clear water, reefs and tropical fish visible. The house was concrete, native style, with a wide shelf along the inside walls that became the beds at night. It had its lawn and beach. We brought lots of food and supplies. People would come across the lagoon from a village on the other side and sell us produce and artifacts. We swam off this small beach, and Sue. Emily and I snorkelled over the reefs to one side of the beach. There was a small dug-out canoe that we paddled about in with the kids. It was an ideal holiday, just us, the retired English couple, and the odd native visitor. On the other side of the island, there was a deep channel. We could hear fishing boats chugging past. There were a few cruising yachts visible in the sounds. The place was timeless.
The Island had paths and we walked to the half-built resort, the restaurant was open, and we had cool drinks. There was a cage with a talking white cockatoo that kept Robert amused. We walked to the top of a small hill that gave a view of the whole Sound. The days passed by and soon we were picked up by the canoe, and walked back up the side of the airstrip, to fly home. The flight was a low-altitude flight and we saw much of Guadalcanal and some of its steep rugged

Munda sunset from the Lodge with Robert

Southern coastline, which was referred to as the weathered coast. Only a few poor villages on that coast. The mountains we passed over were steep and jungle every everywhere. One of these was Gold Ridge, where gold was mined successfully by an Australian Gold company. It was a special family break.

Emily's school, (Woodford) put on a production at the end of the school year. They had a large stage, lots of expats and Solomon Islanders there to watch the performance. It seemed that every kid at the school had some part in the production. Emily's class sang and danced. It was one of the big events in Honiara. Emily had completed her second year at primary school, and Robert now attended a kindergarten run by an English/ Chinese lady, Daryl Pendleton, under a large house on one of the ridges.

Our kids became friendly with two English girls who lived out at Red Beach; about 30 minutes drive past the airport. This was the Straughan family. Joe worked as a financial advisor for a palm oil plantation nearby Jill his wife was a lovely lady and the two girls were Anna and Elizabeth. Red Beach had its community of expats who were British and all worked at the plantation as a British aid to the Solomon's. One of the guys was a Morris dancer and held dancing out at his place. He had several Solomon Islanders dance as Morris men. They were good too. Once a month we would all go out to Red Sands,

to have a combined Morris dance. We were invited to the odd party out there. The Strahan's lived near a beach, some distance from Red Beach, and Joe had a windsurfer, the only one in Honiara. The place was called Red Beach, as that was the colour of the sand after all the fighting. It was the landing place for the US Marines when they came to capture the airport from the Japanese.
The Christmas season came around again. Rob and Emily picked up gifts from Santa at the yacht club. We had a work Christmas party at our place. We put up lights under our house and made the area like a restaurant. The nationals came with their families. Kids swam in the pool; Mums sat under the trees and chatted. Men drank soft drinks and Sue and I cooked food. It went well; this was the first work Christmas party. They found a small snake in a pile of wood under the house. Snakes are hated by the nationals, this snake flew over the fence and landed across the road, I think it survived. At least I now knew snakes live under our house. Bob and his family took holidays and left for Noumea just before Christmas. They were coming back to Honiara end of January for a few days then off to Thailand and Australia for another 5 weeks.
This year we had a Christmas dinner with the Abrams, Pennacks, and many kids at our place. Later in the day, we went to the Mendana Hotel, we sat under the shady trees on the small beach in front of the hotel to let the food settle. It was a warm and ideal place to sleep it off! The next day Boxing Day, we left for our trip to the Western Province.

The idea was to Island hop on inter-island-trading ships. But due to time constraints, we opted to fly. Solomon Airlines consisted of various small planes and some twin-engine 12-seaters. These came with an air hostess on board, who

Skull House at Munda Bay Chief's Island

carried an eski on board with soft drinks and beer and passed these down the aisle while in flight. She also opened and closed the door.
We flew to Munda, the old capital of the New Georgia Islands of the Western Province of the Solomon's. These Islands are close to Bougainville, PNG. Munda was the site of a huge long airstrip built toward the end of WW2. This was a supply centre and hospital base for the latter part of the war. Only part of the runway length is used. Munda became the government centre of the region, mainly due to all the American buildings and infrastructure left after the war. The hospital and some government
buildings remain. There were a number of expats living there. Now, it has become a sleepy backwater. But a beautiful one. We stayed at a lodge on the edge of a huge lagoon.
The horizon had scattered islands on them. The sunset over these islands, brings out magnificent colours of the clouds and sea. The lodge had a simple restaurant and accommodation. The toilet didn't flush, so we were given a bucket and told to walk down to the beach fill it up with seawater and flush it by hand. Yep, it worked. Robert got a tummy upset. In the evening we were sitting in the semi-darkness of the restaurant when in walked a Solomon Islander playing the bagpipes. He played a few tunes and marched up and down the length of the bar. Some Scott must have left this behind; it certainly was put to use! We gave him a tip. He smiled and walked away with his mate. So even Munda piped in the New Year!
We took a guided tour on fibreglass canoes to see a burial Island. This trip took us over the lagoon to a large Island to visit the chief. We were greeted on shore, and taken to the chief's house for a drink. It was a traditional hut, raised off the ground about 4 feet. Smiles all

around, and then back into the canoe to travel to a very small island, just off one end of this island. The Island was full of skulls embedded into the coral rock. On the highest point was a small house about 4 feet high and an A-framed shape. Our guide opened the carved wooden door and inside were many skulls. These were all the past chiefs of this region. The carved door was grey with the weather.
This burial island had been here for a long time. The skulls embedded in the rocks surrounding this little ancient house were captive's heads. An amazing first-hand glimpse into a past culture. We stopped for a swim and lunch on a beautiful remote beach.

Rob next to Chief's Skull house

Across from our lodge was a small island with a few holiday huts on it. We took a boat across to it and spent a day lazing about on the beach, swimming in the clear waters of the lagoon, looking over Munda, which seemed lost in a jungle.

We flew on to Gizo. This is now the commercial centre of New Georgia, Western Province. The Island of Gizo is small and hilly. The airstrip is on a flat island about a kilometre off the main island. So there is a small ferryboat that takes you to and from the airstrip. Gizo has a wharf and a number of the Tuna fishing boats stop over, here. There is a small boat repair yard, a Hotel, a School, a medical centre and a number of Chinese stores that line the potholed, main street. It was a small town, weather-beaten, with a lot of character. We stayed in a bungalow in the grounds of the Hotel. Tim, an Australian who used to work for PacTec, now ran the dive shop, out of the Hotel. We walked up the hill behind town for a view. It was what you expect. A glistening warm blue sea, with islands disappearing over the horizon. The harbour had a few assorted boats; people had come into town for the New Year. Tim took us for a day trip to one of the uninhabited Islands about 40 minutes boat ride away. He didn't have any divers, so a bunch of 8 of us went off for a day's snorkelling. It was a beautiful spot for another lazy day. We met a Dutch family who was on a trip Island hopping the Pacific.

We took over the Hotel kitchen and together made Ole Bollen. We made heaps of them. That evening, a band played and quite a few people turned up for the New Year's Eve party. Halfway through the night, Emily carried a basket of ole-bollen and icing sugar to serve the people there. She walked up to the band while they were playing and insisted they stop and try these too! The owner of the Hotel was a Solomon Islander who liked to call himself Charlie the Chocolate Man. He gave out chocolate lollies to the kids. He was a very well-spoken, intelligent man, who lectured at Universities in New Zealand. He was back for a while to run his Hotel and have a break. A very confident, attractive man and popular with the ladies. Emily became a favourite with two of the Hotel house girls. They saw us off at the island airstrip. Emily cried.

The flight back was New Year's Day, This time the hostess gave us glasses of champagne, one after the other. So we arrived back in Honiara very merry, to meet up with the Abrams. Russell was full of the New Year's port and soon we were back at their place to settle the New Year in. We had started a new decade, the nineties, and felt time was catching up with us. During the past year, our church attendance was rare.

Honiara had an Anglican Church that we attended a few times. This

was a small church without walls, and a few expats attended. The Englishman I sailed with was a faithful attendee. The larger Protestant church was the South Seas Evangelical Church. This was a mixture of Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Christ. The church was well attended
in the time we were there, they even extended the building. The services were very lively and Pentecostal. There was also a Catholic Church on the hill. This was a modern, large building, complete with an Irish Priest. I went there a few times for funerals and other special services. The Seventh Day Adventists were also popular. They had a settlement with a school at Betticama just outside Honiara. The place was well churched and competitive for mission outreach teams visiting from the USA or Australia / New Zealand. Solomon's village structure had an alliance to one church only. So there were Catholic villages, SDA villages, SPEC villages etc. However, we did not find a church, our inclination to find a church was not there either. Emily in the latter part of last year, asked to go to Sunday school and asked what Jesus was about. We had reached a low ebb in our Christianity, mainly through drifting away, not intentionally.

lt was also time to reflect on where we were going. We only intended to be in Honiara for two years. This would be halfway through this coming year. Sue was ready to get back to New Zealand it was over four years since we bought our little house in Christchurch. I would like to spend a year in Noumea before leaving John Nixon's little empire. We seemed to agree that this would be our last year in Honiara.

God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. It was mid-January, and we had just spent the Sunday with the Abrams, river swimming at the Lunga Gorge. Both kids were in bed, Sue and I had eaten a good part of a rock melon watching a Hitchcock video movie. Then the evening routine, I went downstairs and locked the main gate. Our house had an eight-foot fence around it with two rows of barbwire strung above it. The driveway gates were built the same way. The gateposts were high, concrete with broken glass bottles concreted into the top of them. This was a secure property. We also had our two dogs. (but they went to the dog disco every night.) I locked the doors, and checked the windows facing our balcony. Sue and I went to bed. We slept under a sheet; the swishing noise of the overhead fan put us to sleep. Sue screamed! I rolled over to cuddle her, heard a shuffle of feet, then smack! I yelled, "Go away!" and tried to find the light switch above our bed head. The light switched on and Sue was sitting upright in bed. Emily came in a noticed blood on the sheets near Mum. Sue had a cut above her hip. I saw the handle of the knife we had used to cut up the rock melon, on the floor, I couldn't see

its blade. Robert walked in crying. We all sat on the bed cuddling Mum, wondering what had happened. The bedroom was in a mess; the Chinese chest was open and stuff was all over the floor. I saw a towel with some woodcarvings and stuff on the floor. The bedrooms were all down the far end of the house. I wondered if he was still in the house. I phoned Russell from the phone next to our bed. "Russell, Sue's been stabbed; I don't know if he's still in the house!" The gate was locked. The house was locked. I had to let Russell in. I picked up a heavy wood carving and walked out to the living room kitchen. The door was open, no one was inside. I turned on all the lights out of fear and walked downstairs. Ran to the gate and unlocked the gates, threw them open and ran back to the bedroom. He had come in through the kitchen window and picked up our knife from the sink.

Sue was starting to feel sick. Russell arrived and phoned the police. We decided to get Sue to the hospital, Russell rang and it was open. We carried Sue downstairs into the van. Heather arrived with her kids (no way was she going to let them stay home alone). Russell. Sue and I headed off to Honiara Base Hospital. Heather took all the kids home. At the hospital, they quickly examined Sue and found nothing, just a cut above her hip. They got her to walk to a bed in the barrack-style wards behind the main hospital building. Sue was in reasonable spirits and told to stay until morning when the doctors would arrive. I took Russell home, went home changed into work clothes and went to work to open the office and start up the computer for another day's work. I didn't tell anyone what had happened and went back to the hospital to see Sue and take her home. I met Sue coming back to the ward in a wheelchair. She had just had an x-ray. "The knife blade is still inside me" (This was a wide blade about 9 inches long.) "They want to operate midday."

Heather had been back to see Sue and expat ladies came in to give blood. The news was now all through the expat community. The surgeon, an Indian and the Malay anaesthetist were both in town. The surgeon saw me and said, Sue was in a very critical condition. The knife blade may have cut through an artery, but holding it closed, at any movement it could cause severe internal bleeding. He was going to operate in an hour, if he takes 40 to 50 minutes, things will be OK. If it's longer, things are not good for Sue. He'd do his best with what he has got! I saw Sue being wheeled from the barrack ward across the lawn to the operating shed. I touched her and said goodbye. They gave me her rings. I sat on a bench outside the operating shed, under a veranda, Sue's rings in my hand. A few National women were sitting there. They smiled at me and chatted quietly. A few expat women came up to me and hugged me and went on their way. (They were the ones giving blood, I didn't realise!). The surgeon came out and told me

he was going to operate now. I sat there, holding rings I had bought and given, some years ago, remembering the excitement and happiness of Sue saying yes to share her life's journey with me, waiting. . . I prayed and asked God to be with Sue and the surgeon. I couldn't bargain, I couldn't do anything at all. I had to leave it all to the Lord. I felt a presence in my solitude; I knew I was not alone. An hour passed, an hour and twenty minutes. 40 minutes long gone. The Surgeon came out. Sue got through. He had sewn up many holes in her large intestine and said it was like sewing up sausage skin. He was deeply worried about infection and said I had to fly Sue out in the next 24 hours or she would not survive. Sue would be out for another hour at least. I rushed back to work and rang to see about a flight out. I telephoned John Nixon and told him what had happened. There was an unscheduled Qantas test flight of a 747 jet on the airstrip it was due to fly out in an hour. I had to get Sue on board and a registered nurse to accompany her. The NZ high commission rang to say they would have a Hercules up the next day, but try the Qantas option first. The Aussie Insurance broker's wife, Sue was a nurse. She was out at the airport seeing people off on the Qantas flight. She was contacted and rushed home to pick up her passport and a few things say goodbye to her kids and make her way back to the airport. I rushed home to pack a suitcase and get our passports. The bedroom door was locked by the police. I smashed through it, and got stuff ready and headed to the airport. The hospital prepared Sue on a stretcher and she was taken to the airport. I heard that John Nixon had organised an ambulance, hospital and surgeon in Brisbane. The Qantas flight should have left at 10 am but was delayed (not for us) to 12, then to 2:00 pm. And now delayed till 4:00. There was room on board to take a stretcher. We were on board, Sue the nurse, and I, off to safety in Brisbane. Poor Sue the nurse, had absolutely nothing to help Sue if she started hemorrhaging, or anything beyond an aspirin. It was a very tense flight for her; she knew what could happen. She had a few stiff drinks to get through. Sue was more coherent, and we chatted a bit on the way. She was taking it all so well. I've got a tough one here! It was pouring rain in Brisbane. An ambulance came on the tarmac and took Sue away. Nurse Sue and I went through customs, then into Brisbane to a hotel near the hospital. Sue was put into the intensive care ward. The surgeon had checked Sue and decided to leave things as they were and not operate unless necessary. She now had tubes draining her stab wound and was monitored with electronics, fed by a drip. None of this was available in Honiara.

The whole event from Russell arriving at our place to Sue in Brisbane was so full of explainable fortune. The surgeon and Anesthetist in town, unscheduled delayed plane on the tarmac, nurse was available

to accompany them on a short call. John Nixon is on the Gold Coast to get Brisbane organised, and Sue is stabbed by a large blade, surviving death by millimetres. God's providence was overwhelming; He was walking by both our sides and the sides of so many people who assisted us.

I went back to the hotel that night and made painful phone calls to home and family. Sue's dad was upset; he said he'd phone the rest of Sue's family. I said I would ring again when I knew more. Flowers arrived the next day in Sue's ward. She was still in intensive care. I went shopping with Nurse Sue, to get bedclothes and other things for Sue. Nurse Sue flew home the following day she was away from home for 2 nights. The next few days, I kept in contact with family and Arne and Haneke came up to see Sue and we went out to Hungry Jacks. Rob and Emily stayed with the Abrams and seemed OK. Sue was in intensive for some days. They were waiting for her bowels to function again. It finally happened! I decided to leave things as they were and monitor her recovery. The Surgeon in Honiara had done a pretty good job. I took Sue to Kay to stay.

Kay was Sue's friend who was an older lady who had a boarding house. Sue had known her for years. I stayed the night until Sue at Kay's and then flew back to Honiara. During the time I was in Brisbane, I received many faxes relating to work, things were not good, work-wise back in Honiara. Sue stayed with her for the next 6 weeks as she recovered.

Heather and the kids picked me up. I felt very emotional seeing Emily and Robert again. I think the past week had dawned on me. We shifted back into our house; I installed a burglar alarm. People at work had told me that they had prayed for Sue. We stayed in the house for a few weeks; the kids went back to school. Heather took them to and from School and Robert to Kindergarten. We found it very hard living back in the house. Robert set off the burglar alarm one night walking to the toilet at night. It scared us all. Bob came back for a few days as planned then left for another 5 weeks to continue his holiday. No one was available to come up and help me at work. I was cracking up. Heather and Russell convinced me to come and live with them. We did, Heather added Emily, Robert and me to her family. I had intended for Sue to come back to Honiara. As the weeks passed, we phoned Sue in Brisbane and wrote letters. Sue began to be able to walk a little further each day. Kay was doing well, and looking after her. Russell and Heather worked me through this period and I realised it was time to go home with Sue.

We packed our things; I booked a flight to Brisbane. Bob was due back in about a week. Sue was now close to 6 weeks since her stabbing. I had a farewell drink at work, and Emily, Robert and I left Honiara to

be with Sue. On the tarmac, I met up with the Chief Justice, the Morris Dancer and his wife and said farewell. I didn't do the farewell rounds; we just had to go.
Being back with Sue in Brisbane, now 22" February 1990, was great, scales fell from my eyes and a weight lifted off my shoulders, we were John Sue Emily and Robert again.
We stayed a few days in Brisbane and then a week down on the coast in a motel with a pool. A lot of catching up to do.

Home to New Zealand

We arrived in Auckland on the 7" of March and shifted into Dirk and Gonny's downstairs apartment.

While I was in Brisbane, I met up with John Nixon. He offered a job at Today Software with Dale Kelly in Auckland. I was to open a branch in Christchurch. I was to work a few months in Auckland to get to know things, and then start up in Christchurch.

It was a pleasant time living at Dirk and Gonny's place. Emily went to the Emmanuel Christian school next door and Robert to the Kindergarten. I travelled to work in the city on the train. Sue picked up more of her strength. Sue's Dad came up to see us in Auckland and took us to see some of his favourite spots in and around Auckland. We went over to Waiheke Island for a day. This is where Sue's Mum and Dad had their honeymoon. After a month in Auckland, we flew down to Christchurch. Ian picked us up in his car and wondered how he was going to get all our stuff and us into it. We moved into our house, at last. That same day we bought a fridge, washing machine, beds and a TV. We were now fully furnished! The next few days came second-hand kitchen and lounge furniture. The little house filled up quickly. Emily started at Emmanuel Christian School in the city and Robert at John Street Kindergarten, which had a male teacher. We bought a car from down the road and fish n chips from across the road. Our stuff arrived from Honiara and our little house became a home. I rented office space in Victoria Street and started going to work every day. We went to church on Sundays at Dirk's old church in Bishopdale, and even sat in their old place on the pews. We were made welcome at church and felt we were back in the real world. Sue caught up with her friends and I made friends. I realised how much she was at home, here in Christchurch. It was nice to have family nearby. We saw a lot of Ian and Audrey, Kylie and James were about Robert and Emily's age. Sue's sister Julie and Raymond lived near the beach and I got to see their kids Rory and Kristie. It was nice to see Robert and Emily with their family. We could drop in and see Grandpa at any

First Snow at Ferry Road Woolston

time, everything was nearby. People from the church invited us to their homes; Emily's school became a community for us, my work kept me busy, and coal kept us warm at night. After a few months, we outgrew our little house and shifted to 21 Greta Place. We were just along from where Sue grew up. Walks now to shopping centres, became, spot such and such from school days. Emily started Brownies and another circle of friends opened for her. Sue became a Brownie leader and was involved for some years. Robert joined Kia's and I went to the Dad's days with the Kia's. Saturday morning soccer games became a routine; I even helped at training nights.

My job with Today, selling retail software didn't go too well and I left. I was unemployed for 3 months and even went on the dole. It was a time of placing my feet firmly back on the ground. Sue and I did our profession of faith; Robert was baptized by
my brother Dirk. Church and school became a big part of our lives. Mum came over for a visit and Christmas. I went for an interview soon after Christmas and got a job with NZ AMP as the Christchurch sales engineer. Soon we were back on our feet.
In the following years, Emily and Robert moved from Emmanuel to Middleton Grange School. We had a few holidays in Australia. Cory and Helen and Family came over to The North Island and the three brothers had Christmas and 3 weeks of holidays, the three families all

together. In the mid-nineties, we returned to Vila to holiday. We stayed in a hotel in town the first week and at the Le Lagon Resort the next week. It was great to show off the places to Robert and Emily. Emily had some vague recollections of places. Some of the locals still remembered us. We went to Paton Memorial Church swam the favourite beaches, and checked out the houses that were our homes. Pactec was closed; I found Stephen and spoke to him. We were part of history. We became fully-fledged tourists in the second week and enjoyed the Resort life! Emily and Robert turned into Kiwi and Emily"s English accent blended into Kiwi. We holidayed in tents, batches, and motels and tripped around part of the South Island. I too had found a home in my wife's homeland.

Arne found out he had cancer and both he and Haneke fought it for some years. He passed away a shadow of his former self physically, yet in Christian peace.

Sue also discovered she had cancer in her bowel. It was hastily removed by part of her bowel being cut away. This kept Sue in the hospital for some days, unsure if she would have to wear a colostomy bag if her bowels didn't function. It was also discovered that of the lymph nodes on the 40 cm of bowel removed, one-third contained cancer cells. These may have travelled further into her other organs. It took some time for her to get over the operation. Then months of chemotherapy treatment, injections in her arm for 5 days in a row, every month, for half a year. This weakened her, but the signs of the cancer spreading did not eventuate. Sue, again went through the trials of facing death. Cancer is hard to understand and carries a great fear of the unknown. That fear had been opened to us knowing the trials of Haneke and Arne.

Arne was still alive when Sue's cancer was found. While she was in the hospital recovering from the operation, I received a message from Haneke on my phone. I heard her voice and could feel her speaking to her little brother, she was living the last days with her husband, and now her little brother may have to go through her trials too! I cried, not for me, but for the love I have for her, and her pain. I love my Sue, and live with her hope, and will to fight the cancer. God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.

Soon our shared journey as husband and wife will be twenty years, it's a precious gift, with many blessings, remembered and some forgotten.

Epilogue Summer 2001

Rod McKenzie married a Fijian Indian programmer, Margaret, from Bums Philp in Vila and now they live with 2 kids in Sydney.

Gary Nettleton started up a computer business in Vila, went broke and shifted to New Zealand with Lidia.

Paul Shirley and Catherine moved to Auckland and then went their separate ways.

John Nixon, sold PacTec and retired in Noumea, bought a huge launch, now occasionally living in his penthouse on the Gold Coast.

Jeff and Debbie Trebelco lived back in Cornwall and later moved to separate lives. Jeff still sails across to France with his son.

Bill and Carol Saville moved to Brisbane.

Sue and Graham Webb moved to Queensland and started a dried flower and fragrant oil business.

Graham and Mary Teskey moved to Africa, then back to England, where Graham remarried Jane.

Dave and Marje Garlick still live in Winslow, England and party on.

Heather and Russell Abrams lived in Vietnam for a while then settled back in Christchurch, with Russell working contracts overseas.

Bob Fisher and his wife June, bought the PacTec business in Honiara and later shifted to Australia. He sold the business to Stephen and Luke.

John Mason moved to Perth and will publish his book one day.

PART TWO --/-- STORIES

The Sparkly Stones

Emily's Story Jan. 2001

Between two tall dandelion stems Luline hung up her little white shirts and pansy purple skirts. From their pebble house Kirchil could see the shadows withdraw through the drops of sparkly dew as the sun rose.

“We will have to leave soon” he called “before the sun dries out the water wheel on Gervits amazing floating leaf.”

‘Oh all right, won't be a minute — jusi got to find the ... um. Ah here they are” muttered Luline as she pulled her curly head out of a dark canvas bag; followed by her hands holding two tiny little sparkly pieces of stone.

“Oh yes, mustn't forget those” Kirchil commented as he grabbed the food basket and walked towards the door. “Have you got a couple of leaves to wrap them in, we don"t want them to ... well you know.”

Luline nodded solemnly and quickly wrapped them in two soft spongy leaves, and dropped them into the two large pockets in her daffidol yellow skirt. They glanced over the carefully thatched roof, the two green bottle base windows, the little leafy vines growing on the pebble walls and agreed that it should be fine until they returned.

“ Should never have put them there, can't trust garden statues to keep their eyes closed forever, should have put them inside the wishing well, stupid statues waking up it should have never. ”

The mumbling bundle of grey-green-brown ragged clothes shuffled down the small path beneath the lemon trees. It stopped abruptly at a non-descript lemon tree and absent-mindedly grabbed a root. Still mumbling, it wandered down the damp, cool, well cut steps to a small cellar full of racks. Some for stretching some for holding still, a couple for crushing and an interesting specimen on the wall that had a series of sieves sitting beneath a sharp pair of scissors. Levest took off one of his raggedy layers of what could be loosely termed clothes, and sat at the sorting —table his hands holding up his fuzzy haired head. Beside him sat four boxes labelled

: Ear of Weevil, Foxfinger, Prickled Toe and Nosefrost.

He always came and processed herbs when he wanted some time to think. He busied himself chucking various herbs into the crushing machines, bottling the juices that were squeezed out.

“Everyone comfy” shouted Kirchil above the din of the waterwheel as he simultaneously pushed down the ‘go’ peddle. A smile of satisfaction spread onto his face, and prepared to be there for a while. Luline grabbed at the curved leaf edge as they lurched away from the stream bank.

Girvett's Amazing Floating Leaf was the latest development in travel techniques, it was three times as fast as the old style motor- leaves, it

contained 50% less fat, and was recommended by Girvett himself. Kirchil had done a lot of careful research before he finally purchased it for only 39.95 poppy seeds.
“Can you feel the smoothness of the waxed base?”
“Yes dear” Lupine smiled over-enthusiastically at him then thought to herself: Oh well at least he's still using it, not like those crazy exercise machines and those paper fire extinguishers that Girvett sold him last time he knocked on the door.
A sudden swerve and they were speeding off down stream. Luline patted her pockets to make sure the ... um they were still there.
She'd found them on one of her morning fitness strolls: through the grassy paddock across the stepping stones, around the big puddle, past the sleeping statue. But this morning there was a snorting noise coming from the stone carved sleeping child. Luline had walked behind it. There was a little mouse tickling the statue with its tail. The statue could hold it in no longer it smiled and let out a sweet wee giggle, Luline had walked around in front of it just in time to see its sleeping eyes open and the ... um ... they’d just fallen out, she’d tried to give them back but the mouse had run away and the statue had fallen asleep again.
A jolt and a swerve around a small fish brought Luline back to the here and now.
“Watch it, Kirchil. I practically fell off back there.”
“Yes dear'' he absently replied as they speed up again.
Half a day's travel upstream a small woman sat fishing; her line danced on the river and sparkled as it jumped above and below the surface. “Oh got ya little fishy” she swung her rod back and forth as she tried to reel in the sturdy cockabilly.
Finally successful she slapped the cold fish over her shoulder and stumbled towards her little mud hut. Inside it was dark and smelled a little of herbs and now there was a slight edge of fish.
“Dimpty doo doodle dimp” Elfrieda sung to herself as she scratched the strong scales off her freshly caught fish. “It won't be too long before Kirchil and Luline come up to visit. I'm sure they've finished harvesting their poppy seeds by now” she thought to herself as she smoked the fish fillets. ‘there’s more than enough fish here anyway.”
Somewhere along the river in the depths of a yellow skirt pocket a tiny spider made itself comfy between a piece of leaf and a peculiar sparkly stone. Just as it had finished sleepily closing each of its twenty eyes it felt a strange tingling sensation, it slowly opened one eye in time to see the stone glowing red, immediately all of its twenty eyes bulged from its face in disbelief as it stared. The stone now moved to a greenish white light and then Whoomp!
The spider relaxed it was still beside the leaf and the stone had lost its

bright colours. Although it is a lot colder, and surely the pocket had a lot less room in it. Thought the spider as it looked around noticing an unusual assortment of tables, leaves, needles, cups, milk bottles and a distant wall that curved right over to the wall next to him. If it had been clever enough, as spiders certainly aren't, it would have that recognised this strange wall structure to be the same as that of the sparkly stone, and this thought may have lead to the conclusion that he had been sucked inside the stone: as had all the other objects around him.

But of course this never occurred to the spider and he returned to the tiresome and long task of closing each of his eyes as he fell asleep.

Levet closely watched the oily drips of Prickled toe essence plop into a glass bowl. His eye was magnified through on the other side his massive pupil swung up and down as he followed the drops.

“Maybe I shouldn't have put the stones in so distant a statue but they would have been found by Trouple if they were near me. Where are they?” he muttered to himself. He'd checked everywhere. The statue had talked to no-one. All the seed and nut piles of the mice had not hidden them. The Hedgehogs didn't know what he was talking about.

“But the Magpies, they always go for shiny things. Why didn't I think of that earlier? And the Magpies served Trouple, oh I’d better hurry!”

He quickly switched off all the bubbling, dripping, crushing machines, threw on his ragged coat and sped out the door as fast as an old man could.

Huffing and puffing he finally reached Elfrieda's little hut.

“Quick Elfrieda we need to check the Magpies before Trouple gets to them, I need you to hitch up the butterfly and take me to all the nests before Trouple gets them. Quick, Hurry!”

Elfrieda stood tllere her mouth agape watching Levets mouth and not understanding a word.

“Slow down. What has Trouple got?”

“Nothing yet, I hope, oh no what if…..?”came Levets gabbled reply.

“Right, sit down have a cup of tea and explain” commanded Elfrieda.

Exhausted from his run Levet plonked onto a chair and poured out his story as Elfrieda poured out the tea.

Somewhere in a deep dark trunk at the top of a tree.

“What have you seen? My dears” a gruff voice crooned as a green longfingernailed hand tickled the fireflies tummies.

On off on on off off on on on replied a firefly its tail flickering.

“Oh I see, and then ”

On on off off on

“Well that’s very nice to know that Lulines washing is white and purple but I was hoping to find out about some Sparkly Stones!”

Trouples voice gradually got louder and louder as his anger intensified.
The fireflies jumped back and lined up against the wall.
“I know a mouse saw them a few days ago.
NOW GO AND FIND THEM !!!!!!!”
The fireflies hurried out the entrance banging into each other and squabbling.
“Father should never have left the stones to Levet —silly twerps gone and lost them. I would have looked after them so much better.” Trouple muttered to himself as he went out to the Magpie nest.
Watching them always calmed him when all the other idiots were messing things up.
Kirchil turned around “Feeling okay dear ?” He said to the white floral brim and yellow skirt that was all that was visible of Luline in the back of the leaf. “Fine de... Watch out!”
Kirchil spun around and turned the wheel just in time to swerve out of the flight path of a determined firefly.
“Watch where you're going you stupid bug.”
The firefly stopped abruptly, spun around, and sped back to Kirchil.
“You've done it now” muttered Luline as she rearranged her hat and skirt. The firefly stopped in Kirchil's face and to everyone's surprise apologised. Well tried to; by bobbing up and down, bowing.
As the bug was doing so Luline took the stones out of her pockets and looked them over.
The firefly caught sight of the sparkle and its tail buzzed, it was so bright. It smiled and flew off very fast.
“What was that about?” Luline asked.
Kirchil shrugged, “We’ve nearly reached Elfrieda's there's the fallen log and just around that bend there is her stream and up the stream is a ditch and opposite that ditch ...”
“Well it's still quite a way off then isn't dear?”
“Yea I suppose so.”
The bowing firefly swerved through the leaves and up to the dark tree stump. Skidding in the entrance he landed in a heap at Trouples feet.
“Get up you stupid bug. And stop flickering so fast.”
The bug raised itself and bowed then slowly flicked its tail : on off on off off off on.
“Brilliant! Follow then now. Stay with them, but at a distance; don't let them see you.”
The firefly slowly turned towards the entrance, flickering at himself. If he could think in words it would have gone something like this: “Shouldn't have hurried. Make me fly all over the place. ‘hurry up and follow them” One day he's going to be sorry.” But instead a small light inside his head went : on on off off on off . You could just see it

flickering in the darkest part of his eye.
“Right so you think the Magpies stole these stones and now Trouples got them and he's not supposed to have them. Is it dangerous if he has them?” Levet fell backwards off his stool the infinite possibilities of the damage Trouple could do flooded through his mind.
“Oh, I think that's a Yes. Well we had better get going. I'll just leave a note for Luline in case.
Gone to get some stones off Trouple.
Make yourself at home
Love Elfrieda
Right, I’11 have the butterfly ready in a minute.”
Outside the hut window a firefly slowly turned and softly flew up to the top of a dark tree trunk.
“We've got to the ditch now Kirchil where was it after that?”
“Um, right no, left no . . .”
“You don't know?”
“Yes I do. I just can’t quite reniem ... What's that flapping noise?”
Luline turned in time to see a large black head pick her up by the collar and sweep her up into the sky. She fainted.
Kirchil remembered now. It was left; he put the leaf into fast- more-fast speed and hurried to Elfrieda's.
“Only Trouple uses Magpies. What's going on?”
The Magpie jolted through the air it was being guided by Trouple. Although he wouldn't admit it he wasn't very good at catching wind currents. They reached the craggy tree top and Trouple jumped down, grabbed Luline and shook her. She opened her eyes to see a green face squinting at her. It's endlessly black eyes intently watching her, its mossy green nose quivering.
“WHERE ARE THEY?”
Luline immediately stood to attention; he just had the kind of voice. Then she remembered herself and slouched.
“Don't know what you're talking about’ she smugly said trying to avoid his sharp gaze.
Trouple jumped forward and grabbed her around the neck. To her complete shock and embarassment he turned her upside down and shook her. A few hairpins fell to the floor, a red flower, a pocket knife, a few poppy seeds and two sparkly stones wrapped in leaves.
“Ah, you do so” he shouted like an excited child. He dropped her and grabbed the stones turning them over in his trembling green hands. Luline sat up rubbing her head and watched Trouple as he rubbed the stones tenderly. Then she gathered her senses picked up the pocket knife and turned to quietly sneak out. Taking a last glance she noticed Trouple crouched over the stones, murmuring to them.
“Why didn't you tell me your butterfly was too old to fly up to the top

of the trees?”
“I wasn't completely sure.
“Lucky we grabbed that branch before it gave out.”
“Lucky for it or us?”
“Both, it's resting and re not plummeting to the ground.”
“Lucky this vine grows up the tree, so we’ll have something to hang onto all the way up.”
“Lucky that Trouple stole the stones, otherwise we'd never have had the chance to climb the top half of this tree.”
“I hope you're being sarcastic.”
Kirchil leapt off the boat just before it came to a complete stop. He rushed up the daisy lined path to the mud hut, flung the door open: and was completely disappointed. No-one was there to see his dramatic entrance. He stomped over to the piece of paper lying on the table. “Oh great, everyone's gone to Trouples and I'm stuck here wondering why?’ he pottered around made himself a cup of tea and tried to puzzle it all out.
Half a step and she'd be out and able to climb down the tree. She turned to quickly check but Trouple hadn't moved.
Turned forward and was smacked straight in the forehead by a firefly she slumped back and slowly collapsed. The firefly dizzily hovered over her, he tried to pick her up but she was too heavy instead he bowed and flew over to Trouple.
“Great catch Mr Bug nearly lost her then.”
The firefly hovered back. Trouple was never nice unless he was about to be nasty.
The firefly quickly told Trouple that Levet and Elfrieda were on there way up and turned to leave but Trouple grabbed the edge of his wing. The firefly sighed well actually its tail fizzed; he was going to get it now.
“Could you please guard her?”
The firefly nodded dumbly he'd never said please before, something awful is going to happen. The bug flew over and slowly nudged Luline into a comer and sat in front of her.
Trouple sung a little song to himself.
The firefly cringed.
“Few more minutes and we should reach the magpies nest Levet.”
“Finally!” puffed Levet as he hoisted himself from one ivy leaf to the next they slowly peaked over the top off the nest, a massive black shiny eye met them. They ducked quickly. There was a whispered conversation behind a few things and then a One! Two! Three!
Elfrieda and Levet jumped onto the top of the nest. Elfrieda ran left and Levet ran right they balanced on the edges and met at the back. Meanwhile the Magpie watched as something jumped in front

of its face split in two and rejoined behind it. As you can see Magpies aren't particularly bright.
Kirchil slapped the back of his head.
"Of course."
He grabbed a butterfly harness off the kitchen wall and ran out to catch one of the butterflies from the back paddock.
Taking no time to check he grabbed the closest one. It was young and bright, orange and green. He jumped on to its back flung the harness over its antennae and took off. Up into the tree tops. Kirchils head spun as he looked down, he could hardly see the, hopefully soft, ground from here. Together the butterfly and Kirchil carefully flapped their way towards a dead tree, aiming for the tip of its trunk.
Elfrieda grabbed Levets arm pulling him back from the entrance. He turned "What did you ... Oh!" he whispered angrily until he saw a row of fireflies' power out at full speed. They would have knocked him for six, and then Trouple would have got him.
"Thanks" he gruffly replied, embarrassed. "Right, it sounds okay now."
They bounced in the entrance, then skunked along the walls until they saw him. A small table of leaves, hairpins, and seeds sat in front of him. Every time he gingerly hit the stones together one item would vanish from the table.
"Hey there Trouple, I think you've played with them long enough." Levet bounded forward as he teasingly taunted. Trouple got such a shock that he ganged the stones hard together and the table disappeared. He looked up, his black eyes shiny with anger.
"Ha you come into my tree thinking you can just ask for them back?"
"Well there's always hope that you've grown up since we were small and you never shared anything" Levet whined like the younger brother that he is.
Elfrieda rolled her eyes, stomped forward and said "grow up" to the both of them.
"Now let us be adult about this."
Trouple burst out laughing.
The firefly in the corner covered his head.
Two stones hit: Clank, flashes of red and greenish white light, whoomp.
Elfrieda vanished.
Levet gasped.
"You can't put her in there."
"Well I just did."
"Get her out"
"No"
"Yes"

"No!"
“Yes!"
At this point Luline decided the guarding firefly was distracted more than enough for her to make a move. He was crunched in a tiny ball; eyes squished shut, with his wings covering his face.
Out of the corner of his eye Levet saw Luline stand up and slowly walk towards the back of Trouple. He tried not to watch in case Trouple followed his line of sight. Instead he kept up the argument:
“Yes, times infinity to the power of infinity.”
“No, times infinity to the power of infinity to the power of infi...”
There was a sloshly, squelch and Trouple wobbled back and forwards.
“What is that?” he said swiping at his face with the back of his hands. He still held the stones. His hands became stuck to his massive green nose, and his feet became one with the floor.
Desperately he tried to wrench his hairy hands away from his face.
“That is Mums home made strawberry jam!” cried Luline with a grand air of triumph.
“Who carries jam around with them?” Levet exclaimed astonished at the simplicity with which Luline had overpowered Trouple.
“It's part of every self-defence pocket knife. Well the ones my mum gives as birthday presents anyway.”
Unfortunately there wasn"t enough jam to shut his mouth.
Trouple started calling for his fireflies.
They swarmed in from every entrance, with an expression of terrified obedience. Once they saw how helpless he was the bravest one flew forward and sniggered at him. This is the only sound a firefly can make and is the greatest insult. Slowly the fireflies all hovered up and sniggered at him. The whole tree trunk vibrated with the ‘sngh sngh sngh’ sound of the fireflies and echoed with the angry cries of Trouple.
“Let me out of this you stupid sniggering bugs! Right now!”
They all turned around and swarmed out the entrance. Excitedly flicking to Trouple that they were never coming back. Trouple shouted and screamed but they didn't return.
Kirchil had almost reached the dark trunk when he had to swerve a firefly, then another, and then swerve the other way. Kirchil and the butterfly swung like a pendulum trying to avoid all the dozens of fireflies swarming past. Finally during a quiet patch he said “Right I think they’ve all passed” and they flew towards the trunk. ‘Time for proper recognition for a grand entrance’ he thought to himself as he swung the butterfly in the entrance at full speed. Kirchil caught sight of Levet and Luline sprinting out of the way just before the butterfly's foot caught on a knob of wood and bucked Kirchil right onto the shoulders of Trouple.
“Caught you!” Shouted the excited Kirchil.

Poor boy thought he'd just saved the day.
“Hop down Kirchil” Luline whispered embarrassedly.
Kirchil looked around, the room was empty, Luline and Levet were just sitting at a table.
“Did I miss something‘?” He innocently and disappointedly questioned.
“No you just missed everything you egotistic idiot!” sarcastically shouted Trouple.
“1 covered him in mums strawberry jam.” Luline replied meekly.
“Oh, well I'll just get off him them.” Kirchil pulled. There was a pause and no movement. “Oh dear.”
As Kirchil had leapt up onto Trouple his feet had scraped some jam and now were stuck to the stones in Trouples hands.
“I might need a hand here guys”
“Hey what a great way to take the stones off him. We'd just been trying to figure that out.” Levet joyfully announced. Kirchils face glowed with pride he'd thought of how to get the stones off Trouple, wow!
After a hilarious amount of pulling, tugging, and retying boot laces, they finally wrenched the stones from Trouples vice like grip.
“Now be very careful Elfrieda's in there.” Luline reminded Levet.
“She's in there” cried Kirchil panic spread across his face. “Get her out quick she'll starve or suffocate or drown. Who knows what could happen.”
“Oh it's alright in there” Levet replied “I went in as a kid. Time stands still.”
“So how do you get her out?” Luline enquired.
“We have to swap her with something of equal size and something alive.”
“So you mean another living thing has to go in there? How will we get them out?”
“Um, well you can’t less another goes in?”
“What so we have a roster and take turns at swapping ourselves in and out” gabbled Luline as she began to get panicky.
Kirchil had a bright idea. “Why not put Trouple in it and keep him there.”
Luline looked at Levets face she watched as a couple of expressions crossed his face : sorrow like his face had drooped, anger his eyes screwed up then he said “Well I suppose it's fair: he put her in there.”
Trouple suddenly realised what they were talking about.
“No you can't do that, no please nooooo” He whimpered trying to put on a pathetic face and earn some compassion.
“In you go” said Levet “good bye brother.”
He clanged the stones with the solemn look of a white wigged judge.

There was a red flash, a greenish white flash a Whoomp and Touple disappeared.
Then a pmooh a whitish green flash, and a blue flash. In Trouples place stood Elfrieda.
Luline rushed forward and hugged her “Are you alright?”
“Mmmm” she replied slightly unsettled and swaying.
Luline sat her down and explained the final outcome of the adventure.
“Well we’ll have no more Trouble from Trouple now !”

My Trip to Vanuatu

Robert's story age 12

This is a logbook or diary of Robert van Garderen when he went to Vanuatu in 1997 on the 31'st of May till 15" of June

May the 31st

Today we flew from Christchurch to Auckland to Port Vila. The flight to Auckland was 1:20 hour. I was quite excited when I was going onto the plane. On the plane we were given stuffed bacon rolls with noodles. It wasn't that nice. When we were coming into Auckland there were some bright lights. When we got to the international part of the airport (it was separate) I was amazed how big it was. It was huge! When we got on the Air Vanuatu plane it was full of people and it was only a 737-400. Each person had earphones to listen to music. There were 12 stations to listen too.

While we were flying there was some turbulence. On the plane we had a chicken dish with salad and broccoli. With it there was cheese and crackers and desert we had a lime moose with strawberry sauce and cream. It was very nice. When we were coming in for the landing you couldn't tell where you were going and then all of a sudden you felt the touch down. Then the pilot slammed on the brakes and we almost flew off our seats. The pilot had to do that because the runway was very short. When we got outside it was roasting hot. Then we got our baggage and went to get the bus to the Kaiviti Motel where we were staying. It was a two storied place, downstairs is the living area and upstairs is where we slept. That night we didn't get to Vanuatu until about 12 o'clock and didn't go to bed until 2 am. At about 1 am we went to the bakery to get some food.

1st June 1997

This morning I got up at 6 am and waited until seven o'clock when I could have a swim in the pool. When I got in it was cold, but it got warmer. For breakfast Dad went and got some pain chocolate's (which is a bun with chocolate in it.) croissants and escargot's (curly pastry with a sort of custard and sultanas.) At 9:30 am we left for church. The church was an A frame building and there were lots of doors at the bottom of the building to let a breeze through. The sermon was mostly spoken in English but the songs were in Bishlama. I could understand most of the Bishlama. On the way home we went to the supermarket. I was a lot like our supermarket but it was a bit more tatty. Then we walked back to our hotel room and had lunch. Then we went for a swim in the pool. It was cold but it got warmer. After swimming Emily and I went for a walk around town to have a look at some shops. That night we went to the Rossi for desert. It was yummy.

2“ June

This morning I got up and went to the supermarket to get breakfast. I

liked it. Then we went down town to change our money. I got 3750 vatu. Then we went shopping. I bought a Vanuatu T-shirt. Then we had some morning tea at a café and Mum and Dad saw some people they knew. When we got back home we had lunch.
Then I went for a swim. At about 2 o'clock we went to Irririki Island to go snorkelling. The water was a bit murky but we still could see things. I saw these fish that were about 7 cm long and jump underwater from one place to another. Then we walked around the Island. There was lots of plant life on the Island. After that we went to the resort part and had a drink. Then we came back and had swimming and had tea.
3" June
To day we are going to Hideaway Island to go snorkelling and because it was Mum's birthday. We got a taxi at about 9 am. The
road was very holie. I was getting excited. We had to catch a ferry across to the Island. It was a beautiful Island. As soon as we got there I got changed into my togs to go snorkelling. In the water it was warm and there were millions of pieces of coral. There were lots of fish in the water. There were these long skinny fish and bright fish and lots of little blue fish. The fish I liked the most was these medium brown ones that stuck out their head out of the water. They looked like they were breathing. For lunch we had hamburgers.
They were yum. We left at about 2 pm. That night we went out for tea at a French Restaurant for Mum's birthday.
4" June
This morning we got up early to go to the market. When we got there. There were heaps of stalls selling all kinds of fruit and veggie's. When we got back we had breakfast. In the afternoon we went to the Le Meridian Hotel resort. When we came through the entrance way it was a big hall like place and out the back was a path to a swinging bridge that goes across to an other island. The place was huge! It had a golf course, two swimming pools, a casino, a restaurant, volley ball, soccer and more. We stayed by the pool for a while then went back to our hotel and had tea and played scrabble.
5" June
This morning I was trying to sleep in but all birds and insects were being too loud so I couldn't sleep. After breakfast we went into town to get some things and post some post cards. Then we had morning tea at a French café. I had a sort of miniature chocolate gateau. It was tasty. That afternoon we went to the Cascades. I was excited about seeing a tropical waterfall. When we got there a man took us up to the waterfalls. On the way up there was lots of swimming holes and little waterfalls. After walking though bush and crossing a few rivers we got to the Cascades. It was huge; you could feel the spray about 10-12

meters away from the waterfall. It was amazing water going everywhere. Then we went to have a swim in one of the pools and Emily and I slid down a little waterfall. Then we moved on to another pool, which had an even bigger waterfall, which Dad jumped off. We stopped at one more pool with a strong current. That night we went to L'Houstalet for pizza, tea. I had pepperoni. It was tasty.

June 6"

After breakfast we went for a walk to see the hospital that we were born in. Then walked past some schools and one of them Emily went to. When we were walking around I noticed a lot of people in

Vanuatu play soccer and Dad said it was one of their main sports. After walking around we went to Club Vanuatu to have morning tea. When we got back I went for a swim because it was hot. That afternoon Mum and Emily went to see someone and Dad and I went to get some tea and find out about snorkelling trips. After tea we went to Olympic Court for dessert.

June 7"

Today we are moving hotels so after breakfast we packed up all our stuff and sat around until Dad got back. At about 10:15 we arrived at Le Lagon. We had to wait a while before we could get into our room because they hadn't cleaned our room yet. When we got in there, there were two beds, a TV and a little spa pool and air con.

Mum and Dad's room wasn't ready until about 3 pm because the people were still in it. Once we had got our stuff ready we went on a tour round Erakor Island. It was interesting and we saw an open air church. After that we had a drink and chips. Then we watched a movie called Power. It was strange. That night we had a buffet dinner and there was a band playing. The band had three guitars; also this thing with lots of pipes in it and you hit the pipes with a jandle. There were lots of bottles with water in them that you hit.

They made a good sound. Then we went back and watched Twister.

June 8"

This morning Mum and Dad got up and went for a swim. After they got back we went and had a buffet breakfast. At about 10 to 10 we left for church some of Mum's friends were at church we were at. After church we went to their house for lunch. I played on the computer with William a lot of the time we were there. When we got back to the Resort Emily and Dad went on an outrigger canoe and I played a game of pentanque. I came second. Then we played a game of pool and Mum and Emily's team won. That night I watched a movie then fell asleep.

June 9"

This morning we got up early because we were going around the island. Dad had to wait for the hire car; we went to supermarket to get

breakfast. When we were just past the turn off to the Hideaway Island we stopped to have breakfast and take photos. Then we kept driving until we got to the top of a hill. Then we had a look at Port Vila. It was a great view. We kept driving along the pot hole road until we got to a good spot to take a photo of Hat Island. After looking at the Island of Lelepa and Moso from Lelepa landing we drove to Samoa Point. At Samoa Point we went snorkelling and I got a real big flame tree seedpod. There were lots of bush and great scenery on the drive and millions of coconut trees. We stopped for lunch at Beachcomber resort, we had hamburgers yum. On the way we past many villages and resorts, one of the Resorts we went through was Blue Water Resort, which wasn't that nice or interesting. Next we stopped at White Sands Resort for a drink it was a nice place. We drove past our old homes on the way home and it started to rain. At one of the houses we had a look at our secret beach. It was fun going round the island and look at our houses.

June 10"

This morning Emily and I got up and went on a surf ski. It was fun. Then we drove into town to meet Mum and Dad's friends for morning tea breakfast. After talking we got shown around the International School, it was like my old school, but it was just a bit bigger. Then we came back and Dad and Emily went on the catamaran. After lunch I went on a surf ski and the rest went snorkelling. Then Dad and I played a game of pool and I won. That night we went to the Le Lagon Terrace for a Pacific Rim buffet, I liked it. There was a band and Tahitian dancers. After tea we went back to our room and went to bed.

June 11"

This morning Mum got up and went for a walk. While me and Dad had breakfast and Emily lied in bed. After breakfast Dad and I went on a Catamaran. We went fast and it was fun. At about 5 to 11 Dad and I went to the activities centre for table tennis tournament Dad and I were the only ones there and I won. For my prize I got a Le Lagon drink cooler. While I was getting my prize Dad saw Mum going to lunch. When we got back we waited a little while then we left for lunch at Erakor Island and we had a walk around. When Mum got back we went to the activities centre to play a game of golf, but no one was there, so we came back to our room and watched Richie Rich while Mum was helping at brownies. When she got back we got ready for dinner. There was a Melanesian feast for tea. It was nice.

June l2"

This morning we watched a movie called ED. It was funny. Then we went to breakfast. We got ready to go on a catamaran. There wasn't much wind but we still had fun. After that we left to go to town for

lunch. After lunch Dad and I went to look for shoes. It was hard because most of the shops were closed because it was lunchtime but we got some Puma's in the end. When we got back to the resort Dad and I went to play a game of golf. We met Mum and Emily half way through. Dad said I'm a good golfer. When we had finished we mucked around a bit then got ready for tea at the Indian people's place. We had a nice tea. They had a computer with all these cool games on it.

June 13"'

This morning we got up and got ready to go snorkelling at Castaway Island. After breakfast we went to the lobby to wait for the tour bus. It was a bumpy drive, but there was nice scenery. We had to catch a glass bottom Ferry across to the island. When we arrived at the Island we were told what not to touch and what we could touch. Once we got changed we found a spot to go snorkelling after being in the water for about 40 minutes I got out and went and got some food and drink. The coral in the water was incredible, it was bright and there were a lot of fish swimming around. On the way back from the island it looked like it was going to pour down with rain but it didn't. When we got back from the tour we mucked around for a while then went into town for lunch. We had hamburgers at Olympic, it was yum. Then we split up and Dad and I went to have a look around. Then we went over to the activity centre. I got some golf clubs and I played a game of golf. When I got back to the room I waited until the game of pentanque started. I didn't do well because they were throwing it hard. That night we went to the Tarn Tarn cocktail bar then went to a lovely French Restaurant with very nice food. I liked it.

June 14'h

Today, we are going back, boo! After breakfast Dad and I went on a catamaran. It wasn't that windy but it was still fun. Then I went back to my room to start getting ready. I went to play a game of pool with Dad and Emily, but the white ball didn"t come out so I spent about 10 minutes trying to get another one. When I came back without the ball, we started playing with the black ball. Then after we sank a few balls the white one came out. After that we went down to the pool to have lunch, we had hamburgers. Then Dad and I went in an outrigger canoe. It was fun. It wasn't that hard really.

Then I went for a swim in the pool. At 1 pm we went back to get ready for the trip home. After we had finished packing and were ready to go we went to the lobby. The bus was late, so we hang around the lobby waiting for it. When we arrived at the airport we heard the plane was late. It was boring waiting for the plane to land. Just as it was time for us to get on the plane it started raining. I had a fun time in Vanuatu, it was sad to leave. The flight didn't seem as long on the

way back. After going through customs and all that rubbish we finally got to get out of the airport. We only saw Delinda at the arrival gate. She told us that my second cousin who was born when we were away had died on Friday 13". When we got back to their place we were told about Jacob and what happened to him. At about 11 pm I decided to go to bed.

June 15"

Today after breakfast we went to church then after lunch Delinda showed us around some of Auckland. Then we got taken to the airport. When we got back to Christchurch I was cold. Mr. Bangma took us home.

Emily and Sue's Scrapbook Story

Holidays July and August 1984

Written by Emily and Mum,October 1984

We flew to Australia then to Melbourne. We stayed a week in Melbourne spending a lot of time with all of daddy's family and my cousins. We met cousins Lynette and Carolyn, Oma and Opa. It was their 40"' wedding anniversary. We went out for a Chinese dinner.

We flew to Auckland on an aeroplane. We hired a campervan and travelled in it for two and a half weeks. We went from Auckland up to the Bay of Islands and gradually down the North Island. In the Bay of Islands we went on cruise on a Fullers cruiseboat and had lunch at a restaurant on a small island.

We went to Waitangi to have a look at the Maori House and Canoe and the museum. We then drove down to Auckland and stayed there a couple of nights, then down to Rotorua. The camping ground we stayed in had hot pools in it. Daddy and Emily and mummy had swims in the big pool, Robert watched. The night we stayed in Rotorua we went to McDonald's for tea. We had a look at the hot pools the next day. We went to Rainbow and Fairy Springs while in Rotorua. We fed the trout and had a look at lots of animals. We went down to Lake Taupo and to Turangi where we stayed in a motel.

Next day we went up to Tongaroro National Park and stayed in the camping ground on Mt Rtiapehu, we went up to the snow. Daddy helped me make my first snowman. Mummy took photos with me and the snowman. We had a look at the Chateau Hotel nearby.

Next day we drove down to Palmerston North, we stayed the night with some friends mummy used to work with a long time ago in Brisbane. They have two boys Matthew and David, so Robert and I played with them. We had tea with the Sinclairs and talked, then mummy, dad and Robert and I slept in the campervan. We had breakfast with the Sinclair's and waved goodbye and we drove off reaching Wellington around lunch time. We stopped at a big car museum just before Wellington. We the drove up a road that looked out over the sea. We stopped and had lunch in our campervan. We then went and saw the Bell's who used to live in Pt Vila. They have a boy Samuel and a girl Emma. We all went and got Samuel from school and did some shopping. We arrived back at the Bell's and the children played. Samuel and Enima's dad anived home from work. The children had tea and off to bed.

The next morning all the children played and then we all went for a walk along the water's edge across the road from the Bell's house. It was cold and windy so we went back to the house and had lunch. After lunch we waved another goodbye and set off to see Aunty Kay and Uncle David. We had fish n chips for tea at Aunty Kay's that night.

Next day we went to see mummy's friend Anne. We went to McDonald's for lunch and Daddy and I played in the play ground.
Next day we went on a ferry from the North Island. Wellington to Picton in the South Island. We took the campervan on the ferry and arrived in Picton after lunch and drove the campervan off the boat and drove until dark.
We stayed the night in Murchinson in a motel. The next day we drove for a long time and went through some snow. We stopped at Hanmer Springs and stayed in the hotel. We went for a drive around Hanmer and had a walk through the forest. After the walk we had a swim in the hot springs. Robert didn't swim. Mummy had a quick swim. Daddy and I tried the four different pools out. We went back to the hotel, Robert and I had chips for tea. Robert went to sleep. I watched T.V. Daddy and mummy went and had dinner. Daddy came up to the room and got me and I had ice cream with mummy and daddy.
The next morning we drove down the Christchurch. We went and saw grandpa. Mummy made lunch at grandpa's place. We went and saw Aunty Gonny and Uncle Dirk and my cousins. We stayed in the campervan for two weeks at their place. We took grandpa on a couple of trips in the campervan to Akoroa and over Banks Peninsula. Also to the Gardens in Christchurch. We went to the snow with Aunty Gonny, Uncle Dirk and all of the cousins plus mummy and daddy and Robert. We had snow fights. We had lunch in the camper van.
Daddy went back to Pt Vila and we took the camper van back to a man in Christchurch. We saw daddy off at the airport, he went on a big plane.
Robert, Mummy and I stayed at grandpa's place fore another 2 weeks. We saw Aunty Julie, Uncle Raymond my cousins Kirsty and Rory a lot. It was grandpa's birthday while we stayed and I did a nice picture on Grandpa's card. Aunty Kay and Uncle David came and stayed at grandpa's and Uncle Ian for one night.
We went to the Zoo one day and Mummy's friend Sharon and her girl Julia. We went to Julia's fourth birthday too.
We went out for the day to Mummy's friend Jan and played with Kirsty and Ben.
We flew back to Pt Vila. It was nice to see Daddy again.